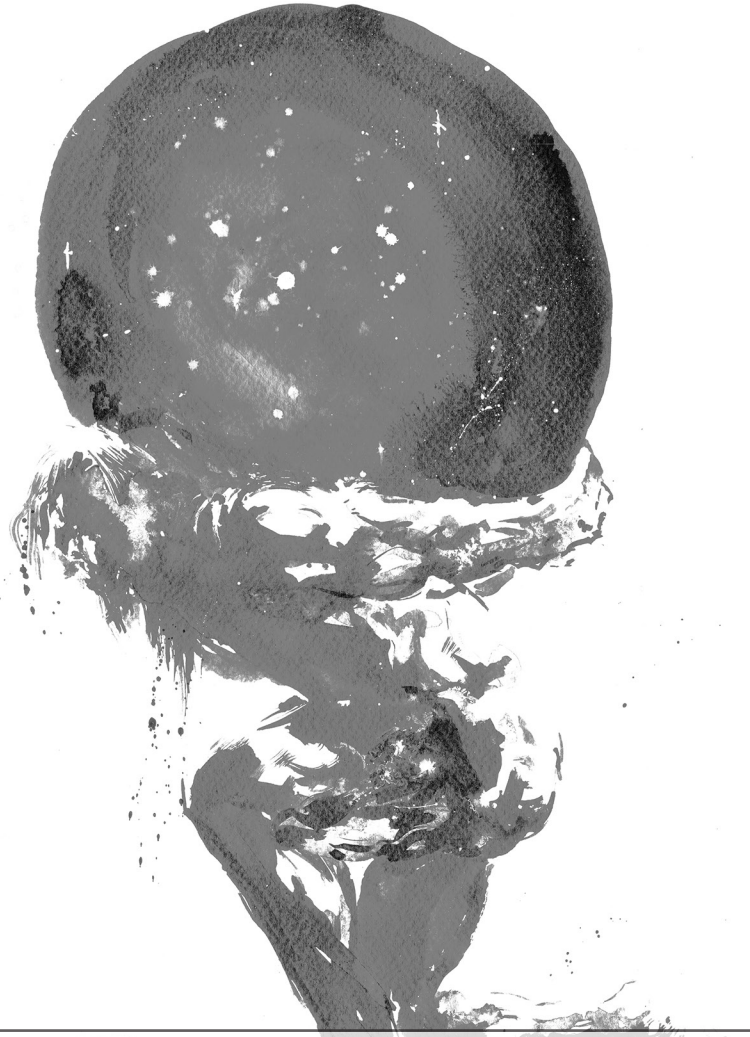


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Reflections of the SONEMUS Fest 2024: Resisting WARiations

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REFLECTIONS OF THE SONEMUS FEST 2024: RESISTING VARIATIONS

sonemus fest

31.10.2024. u 20.00h
MUZICKA AKADEMIJA UNSA
(SARAJEVO I SA ZAGREBOM)
SOLILOKVIJI - SONEMUS SOLOISTS

1.11.2024. u 20.00h
BOSANSKI KULTURNI CENTAR
(BRANJICA SARAJEVO I ZA SARAJEVO)
ENSEMBLE FOR NEW MUSIC TALLINN
(ENMT) – ESTONIA

9.12.2024. u 20.00h
MUZICKA AKADEMIJA UNSA
(SARAJEVO I ZA ZAGREBOM)
MONOCHROMOPHONIA
SARAJEVSKI KVARTET
SAKSOFONA

KOMPOZITORI:
D. LANG
L. LEH
E. MASNO
S. MEITE
G. F. HAAS
H. WADZUJIC
L. WIEBEPPEL
A. SJURJ
K. STICKHAUSEN
A. WALZANI



WARIATIONS

In the midst of an increasingly globally unstable socio-political environment, and the many (bureaucratic) challenges faced by the music community, The Society of New Music – SONEMUS is expanding its activities with a relentless dedication to presenting the new sound experiences guided by the belief that art remains one of the few areas of human activity where genuine communication and the pursuit of truth are still ideals worth striving for. Corresponding not only with current musical trends but also with the turbulent nature of the *Zeitgeist*, SONEMUS Fest 2024 took

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place in Sarajevo in an extended format from October 31 to December 9, comprising three concerts and masterclasses, bringing together local and internationally acclaimed artists, devoted friends of the festival, and emerging musicians, who performed Bosnian and world premieres of representative contemporary works, representing the diversity of musical ideas of our time.

Referring to the destructive effects of the dominant political power and the misuse of technology, which have led to widespread anxiety, intellectual apathy, dulled empathy, and a diminished ability to hear the Other (and/or the different), in a spirit of resistance SONEMUS Fest 2024 was thematically framed under the program title *Wartiations*. This wordplay juxtaposes the concept of musical variation, as a fundamental expression of rationalism and Enlightenment in music, with “wariations” that allude to war and conflict [an amalgamation: war + (var)iation].

No to Wariations, Welcome Variations!

In a notion of a musical monologue, the opening concert titled *Soliloquies* took place on October 31 at the Academy of Music – University of Sarajevo. According to the thematic concept, the repertoire featured a series of compositions for solo instruments. Saxophonist Rijad Šarić started with Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *In Freundschaft* (1977), where the musical development of the piece, based on the theme-melody formula and its mirror shape, was enhanced by the soloist’s movements, physically expressing the process of the composition. After evoking the delicate experimental sonic weaving of the piece *Wolves and Winds* for bassoon and tape (2021) by Estonian composer Elo Masing, bassoonist James Aylward performed *Axis Mundi* (2012/13) by Liza Lim, exploring the changing “behaviors” of the bassoon, reflected through sonic “knots” of the series of irregular scales and microtonal intervals, the richness of timbres, and complex multiphonics. The program included the challenging composition *Dah* [Breath, 2012] for bass flute by the renowned Bosnian composer Ališer Sijarić, which explores the patterns of breathing rhythm and their ability to convey emotional states on the flute. During the performance, flutist and composer Hanan Hadžajlić demonstrated the expanded interpretative capacities and reinvention

of the flute techniques and expression. The concert concluded with David Lang's *catchy* work *Press Release* for bass clarinet (1991), characterized by its pop mood, based on rhythmic shifts and contrast between a high melody and a low, driving funk bass line. The clarinetist Armin Smriko brought their sense of "groove" to the stage.



Figure 1. Hanan Hadžajlić © Aida Adžović.

The focal point of the second festival concert, held on November 1 in the Gallery of the Bosnian Cultural Center, was (primarily) the musical exploration of the sound micro-qualities, performed by the acclaimed Ensemble for New Music Tallinn (ENMT), comprising six exceptional musicians: Karolina Leedo (flute), Mirjam Avango (clarinet), Toomas Hendrik Ellervec (violin), Talvi Nurgamaa (viola), Paul-Gunnar Loorand (cello) and Talvi Hunt (piano), under the direction of Arash Yazdani, an Iranian composer and conductor based in Tallinn, with the "guest member", musicologist Rijad Kaniža, responsible for the live sound mixing of all the festival concerts.



Figure 2. Ensemble for New Music Tallinn © Vanja Čerimagić.

On this occasion, the Ensemble for New Music Tallinn premiered the piece *Ghetto 2024: دومص* for ensemble and tape composed by Hanan Hadžajlić, a Bosnian composer with an international career, as a commission for the SONEMUS Fest. Connecting the aesthetics of contemporary classical music with EDM, trap, and musical elements from the Middle East and North Africa, this composition follows the transformation of individual marginalized voices into a collective expression of protest through intercultural musical dialogue, reflecting how immigrant subcultures have transformed the global music scene despite marginalization. Using the Arabic term *دومص* [šumūd; perseverance/resistance/steadfastness/struggle] as part of the title, *Ghetto 2024: دومص* resonates with the decades-long suffering of the Palestinian people. After its world premiere in Sarajevo, the Ensemble for New Music Tallinn performed this piece two weeks later in Berlin as part of the Sound Plasma Festival program.

The repertoire featured Liisa Hõbepappel's piece *The Jangling Lightness of Solace* for ensemble (2022), which reflects a bright and mosaic-like sound with intricate details that come together in an interwoven web of meanings. During the performance of Sonja Mutić's piece *Resound II* for ensemble and fixed media (2021), listeners were immersed in an ambient landscape of the rich and subtle world of harmonics, shifting from acoustic instruments to electronics, within

their dynamic sonic interiors. After a nuanced aural meditation, Karolina Leedo (flute), Paul-Gunnar Loorand (cello) and Talvi Hunt (piano), as a cohesive musical trio, performed Ališer Sijarić's *Drei Farben* [Three Colors] for flute, cello and piano (1999), dealing with the "fluid mechanics" of the piece, and creating a sonorous kaleidoscope of the unusual density and expressiveness built on structural processes derived from the overtone sequence, translated into the rhythmic divisions.

In the concluding piece by Arash Yazdani, titled *Dimension II, Destruction* for sextet and pre-recorded instruments (2012), the composer adopts a direct approach to the sound as a lively source of energy, treating it not only as the "material" of music but the music itself. By utilizing interference beatings and summation frequencies, and the constant shifting of their net, Yazdani creates a microtonal environment of expanding intensity and loudness, that results in an intense, occasionally unpleasant, and physically painful but powerful ecstatic auditory experience. The "sediment" of the frequencies extremely close in pitch can be felt in two ways: as the (transcendent) destruction of sound or as the sound of destruction.

The concert *Monochromophonia*, held on December 9 at the Academy of Music – University of Sarajevo in two program blocks, featured the Sarajevo Saxophone Quartet, consisting of Rijad Šarić (soprano and alto saxophone), Lev Pupis (alto saxophone), Mirza Sijerčić (tenor and alto saxophone), and Zoja Vuković (baritone saxophone), an ensemble recognized as an emerging "driving force" in the interpretation of contemporary music within the Bosnian context.

During the first section of the program, Rijad Šarić and Mirza Sijerčić performed *Dan za dnem* [Day After Day, 2003], a composition for two alto saxophones by Slovenian composer Urška Pompe, inspired by the feeling of helplessness in response to unpleasant events reported in daily newspapers. It is characterized by a musical dialogue between the two instruments, featuring a line of multiphonics alongside a layered line utilizing slap and *flatterzunge* techniques, that evolve through quarter-tone harmony and transform into a speech-like rhythm in the end. The quartet delivered an impressive performance of the *Saxophonquartett* (2014) by the prominent Austrian composer Georg Friedrich Haas, which relies on microtonal juxtapositions and interference effects that emerged from twelfth-tone intervals with the shading effect that creates a feeling of the continuous *glissando*.

Complementing the aural ambient of the previous section, the highlight of the program was the premiere of *Monochromophonia* for saxophone quartet and live electronics (2024), a microtonal composition by Ališer Sijarić. In search of the sonorous equivalent of photon motion and the visual imagery of a glittering light beam reflection, the interference beatings of the interaction of two saxophone quartets – one positioned at the center of the hall, while the other reproduced as a layer on the tape with speakers placed at the edges – created an immerse sonic space of endless microtonal monochromo(pho)nic weaving.



Figure 3. Monochromophonia concert © Vanja Čerimagić.

What does the future hold?

The Power of Children's Musical Creativity: The First Edition of the SONEMUS New Generation Festival

In alignment with one of its crucial missions – to foster creativity among young musicians and enhance their development in contemporary art music – the Society of New Music – SONEMUS has established a youth festival called SONEMUS New Generation. The first edition, held on December 14 and 15, 2024, at the University of Sarajevo – Academy of Music, brought together primary and secondary music school students, offering them a unique platform to explore innovative musical ideas.

The two-day program, conducted by teachers from the Academy of Music, as well as members of the SONEMUS Ensemble and Impro Ensemble MAS, included an interactive multidisciplinary workshop, divided into four thematic units: *Extended Techniques and Improvised Instrumentation* (led by violinists Sara Barbara Bilela and Alex Mateescu, flutist and composer Hanan Hadžajlić, saxophonists Rijad Šarić and Zoja Vuković, and pianist Mirza Gološ); *Free Improvisation* (led by composer Hanan Hadžajlić); *Introduction to Composition: From Musical Idea to New Piece* (led by composer and professor Ališer Sijarić); and *World of Electronic Music* (led by musicologist Rijad Kaniža).



Figure 4. SONEMUS New Generation © Vanja Čerimagić.

After exploring various aspects of composing and performing contemporary improvised music in an accessible and comprehensive way, the workshop participants, including Selver Durić (clarinet), Jan Zeherović (saxophone), Umihana Uma Halilović (violin), Tara Zovko (violin), Erliha Mekić (violin), Lana Avdović (double bass), Timur Sokolović (accordion), Omar Hukić (piano), and Sofian Sijarić (piano), developed the final concert program under the mentorship of Hanan Hadžajlić, the artistic director of the festival SONEMUS New Generation. On December 15, they performed as the SONEMUS New Generation Ensemble at the University of Sarajevo – Academy of Music, alongside members of the SONEMUS Ensemble and the Impro Ensemble MAS.

The concert's first part featured compositions based on graphic notation, stemming from the workshop *Introduction to Composition: From Musical Idea to New Piece*. Violinist Alex Mateescu, a member of the Impro Ensemble MAS, played a graphic composition for violin by ten-year-old Tara Zovko. Following this enchanting performance, the concert's dynamics heightened with a piece that was collaboratively composed by the SONEMUS New Generation Ensemble members.

On this occasion, the participants presented their works developed during the workshop *World of Electronic Music*. Erliha Mekić and Jan Zeherović showcased their piece titled VCOs, followed by the presentation of the concept *Granular Microphonia*, a short electroacoustic work created in real-time. After the pianists Sofian Sijarić and Omar Hukić gave musical patterns as an input recorded by Tara Zovko, these two samples were used as the initial compositional material and processed with different processors by Timur Sokolović (delay processor) and Selver Durić (granulator).

The first movement of the final *Impro Concept in G (I & II)* emerged from the workshop *Free Improvisation* and was enthusiastically performed by Selver Durić (clarinet), Jan Zeherović (saxophone), Umihana Uma Halilović (violin), Tara Zovko (violin), Erliha Mekić (violin), Lana Avdović (double bass), Timur Sokolović (accordion), and Omar Hukić (piano), all impressively conducted by Sofian Sijarić. During the second movement, the talented and promising members of the SONEMUS New Generation Ensemble shared the stage with their mentors Hanan Hadžajlić (bass flute), Rijad Šarić (saxophone), Zoja Vuković (saxophone), Sara Barbara Bilela (violin), Alex Mateescu (violin), Mirza Gološ (piano), and Rijad Kaniža (electronics).

During the concert, one of the main ideas behind the overall project was highlighted in a speech by Ališer Sijarić, a composer, dean of the Academy of Music – University of Sarajevo, and the founder and artistic director of the Society of New Music – SONEMUS, who emphasized the importance of musical improvisation in the educational process for children from an early age, and underlined free creativity as a crucial factor in developing their overall cognitive abilities. Creating space for youth voices and growth is essential for tracing new musical paths rooted in genuine energy and an open-minded perspective. The new generation has the potential to break the “hermetic aureole” of the institutional narrative on music (occasionally isolated from reality) and overcome the emptiness of the repetition of those strict outdated patterns.

Let's switch positions! Children, the podium is yours!



Figure 5. SONEMUS New Generation © Vanja Čerimagić.

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