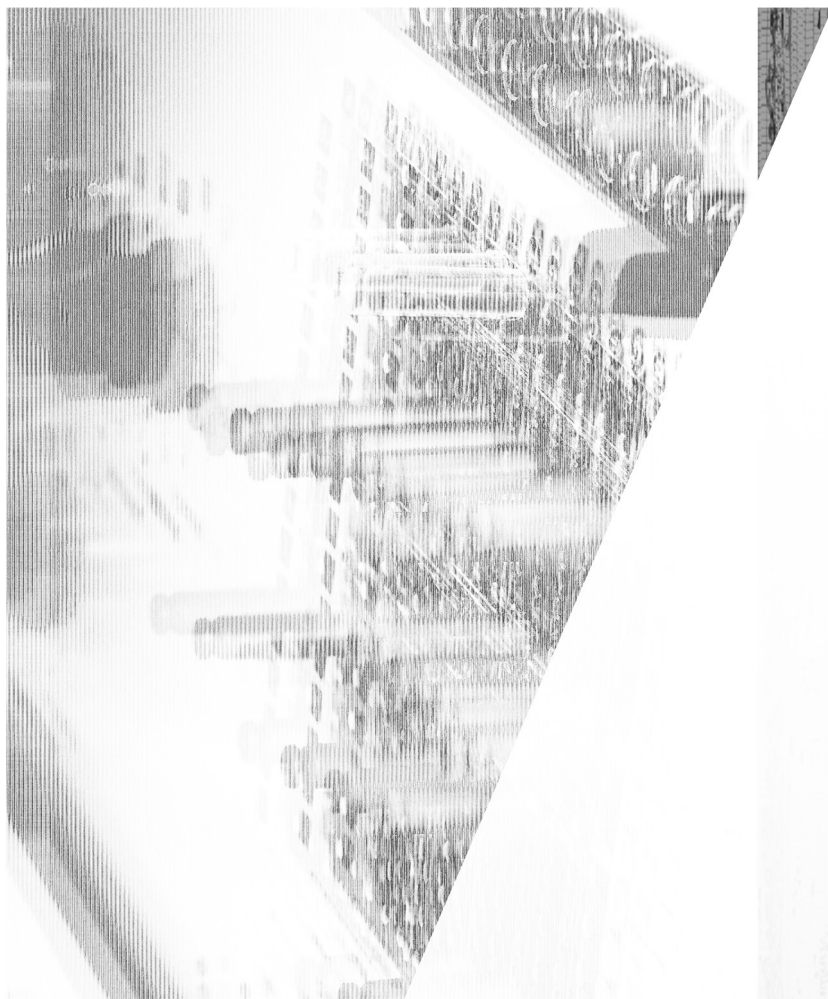


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I N S Δ M

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ARSENIJE JOVANOVIĆ: PORTRAIT OF A RADIO ARTIST¹

Abstract: Arsenije Jovanović (1932–2025) was one of the pioneers of Serbian and Yugoslav modern, experimental radiophony, as well as one of its the most prolific and most awarded practitioners. Yet, the writings on his radiophonic works are scarce. There is no overview of his radiophonic output, as there is no thoughtful insight into his overall poetics. This paper is thus conceived with the idea of offering such insight into radiophonic worlds of Jovanović. This seems appropriate in the context of the 40th anniversary of *Radionica zvuka* (*Sound Workshop*), established in 1985. Jovanović influenced the conception of this serial and was its frequent collaborator, although his career spread internationally. In this paper, Jovanović's short biography will be presented, with more context about his work in radio. Then, Jovanović's poetic and autopoetic statements will be discussed, with short comment on his reception. The final part of the paper is dedicated to the mapping of Jovanović's radiophonic opus.

Keywords: Arsenije Arsa Jovanović, radio art, acoustic art, sound art, Radio Belgrade.

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LIFE AND CAREER PATH

Arsenije Arsa Jovanović was born in Belgrade in 1932. By his primary vocation he was a theatre director, having finished Theatre Academy (today Faculty of Dramatic Arts, University of Arts) in Belgrade in 1956. In the following year he studied history of arts and literature at the University of Zadar (Croatia), and in 1964 he finished a television production course in London (UK) (*Enciklopedija Srpskog narodnog pozorišta*, n.d.). Jovanović's career as theatre director encompassed full-time engagements at the National Theatre, with guest-directions in other theatres across the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, USA and UK. Although he started in theater, Jovanović was a multimedia artist, extensively creating as a radio, television and film director, a writer and adaptor of plays for theatre, radio and television, photographer and visual artist, poet, travel essayist and journalist, and author of four books (Jovanović 2025, 493–503). In the last decades of his career, he turned more and more to radio art, which was eventually his main creative outlet. At the same time, it is perhaps the field of work he is mostly known for, and which will be in the focus in this paper.

Since 1958, Jovanović worked as an assistant, and then (since 1962) as a lecturer at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade (*Enciklopedija Srpskog narodnog pozorišta*, n.d.), at the Department for Acting. Jovanović was an inspiring and somewhat unconventional drama teacher, according to his student Anastasija-Vesna Ilić (née Lončarević). She remembers that Jovanović paid particular attention to studies of Serbian ethnographers, such as Sima Trojanović and Tihomir Đorđević, with a focus on psycho-physical expressions without words, which she found incredibly important. Students also worked closely with their colleagues from the Academy of Music, in the class of ethnomusicologist Dragoslav Dević. Thus, the focus was on folk literature and songs, the works of Petar Petrović Njegoš, the hagiographies of Serbian saints, and field trips to Serbian monasteries. Students were part of Jovanović's projects, as Ilić recounts many visits to Radio Television Belgrade's studio in Košutnjak and Studio 10 in Make-donska Street (Anastasija-Vesna Ilić, pers. comm. March 28, 2025). Ilić was the main vocalist in his radio art work *Ostrvo umirućih magaraca* (*Island of the Dying Donkeys*, 1988), and part of the group for ethnological-musicological and

ethnotheatrical research,² that participated in *Vila zida grad* (*Fairy Builds the City*, 1986), dedicated to the celebration of two centuries since the birth of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić.

Jovanović's pedagogical career ended in 1992/3, when he was fired because of his anti-war and anti-nationalistic political views and statements during the break-up of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. On one hand, his interest in the religious and spiritual traditions of the Serbian church, as evident in the example of his work with students, was in collision with the official socialist politics of the former Yugoslavia. Although he worked consistently in significant state institutions such as the National Theatre, the University of Arts and Radio Television Belgrade, since the 1960s, Jovanović considered himself removed from socialist ideology, and even as a "dissident" and "anti-communist" (Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview).³ During the 1980s, the burgeoning nationalistic sentiment, among other complex social and political changes, made religious topics more welcomed, as they were not so strictly looked upon as in previous decades. Jovanović supported the church policies of the time, for example by participating in the series of events in Canada in celebration of Saint Sava and promotion of Memorial Temple project (Vesić and Peno 2020, 269). On the other hand, Jovanović expressed his distance from the Serbian Orthodox church, stating that he lost respect for it because "when the clash with communism started, even the church lost its dignity" (Ćuruvija 1992). Being strongly opposed to the war and nationalism and dedicated to maintaining both his Belgrade and Rovinj (Croatia) addresses, Jovanović did not easily find his place in the growingly divided, and eventually war-torn, society.

Jovanović's contemporary work was mostly done in his own production studio, the Adriatic Sea Factory, based in Rovinj. The address in Rovinj had strong significance for Jovanović because of his unbreakable relation to the sea. The

2 Grupa za etnološko-muzikološka i etnoteatrološka istraživanja. As listed on the cover of the tape stored in Radio Belgrade's Phonoarchive (RZ 32). In 1985, Jovanović mentions forming "Ethnotheater" in cooperation with Ethnographic museum in Belgrade, and in the same text (following his notes on the work he was directing at the time) Dragoslav Dević as counselor for the ethnomusicological questions (Jovanović 1985, 63, 66).

3 This was stated in the context of his work in Television Belgrade. Jovanović explained that the editor and his superior was Zora Korać, wife of the socialist functionary and hero of the World War 2 partisan movement Dušan Korać. Still, Jovanović recalls Zora Korać being open to work with young people, directors such as Goran Paskaljević, Lordan Zafranović and himself, who he considered opposed to the regime (Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview).

house in Rovinj – the topic of *Ma maison* (Radio France, 1993) – is one of the core points in Jovanović’s spiritual topography. The other could be Resava Cave in Central Serbia. An accomplished sailor, he traveled through the Adriatic, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and spent significant time on the water and aboard boats. His connection to the natural world, to animals but especially to the open sea, seems to be the core of Jovanović’s worldview, oriented towards freedom of movement, expression and being. Symbolically, his first radio art composition – *Igra za jednu Galiolu* (*Prayer for one Galiola*)⁴ – created in 1967 as a Radio Belgrade production, is dedicated to both eponymous islands and the ship, christened with the same name by Jovanović. In further decades, Galiola became a recurring topic of his radio work. Other recurring themes include traveling, either by sea or land, encounters with animals, the acoustics of different spaces and places, war topics, and folk and religious themes. His radiophonic output is not bounded to these topic groups only, but those strike us as dominant.

RADIO WORK

Jovanović directed plays for various Radio Belgrade series since 1961.⁵ Outside of the regular production, research in sound was conducted (although not on a regular basis) on the platform known inside Radio Belgrade as the Drama workshop, recognized and named as such by Neda Depolo, Radio Belgrade’s dramaturgist and editor. As the *spiritus movens* of Radio Belgrade’s drama and experimental radio production, she considered Jovanović a “progenitor of sonic searches and compositions in our country”, with “the line of distinguished works, awarded at international festivals and, also important, presented at international symposia, where new possibilities of radio art were demonstrated” (Depolo 1999, 135). She also valued him as an intuitive author who was “open-

4 While the Serbian title is *igra* (in translation: *play*, or *dance*) (RZ 45), the English translation is *molitva* (*prayer*). The German version also refers to *igra* (*dance*): *Tanz für ein Galiola* (Kunstradio 1988).

5 These are the series *Drama*, *Drama 3*, *Dramski program za decu* (*Drama program for children*), *Mala scena – Komedija* (*Small scene – Comedy*), *Radionica zvuka* (*Sound Workshop*), *Radioteka – Sa pozorišne scene* (*Radiotheque – From a Theatre Stage*), *Ekperimenti* (*Experiments*), *Radioteka – Dramska klasika* (*Radiotheque – Drama Classics*), *Zvezdani časovi* (*Star hours*), *Dokumentarna – Svedočanstva* (*Documentary – Testimonies*), *Pozorišta Srbije* (*Theaters of Serbia*), *Radio igra* (*Radio Play*) (cf. Donić and Rajić 2004, 98–102).

ing the spaces of irrational” (ibid., 64). As an editor, she was listed on numerous Jovanović works.⁶ Among the creators she worked with, he was the one she had most intense collaboration with (Malavrazić 1999, 26). Since Jovanović was an outside collaborator (and not regularly employed with Radio Belgrade), Depolo’s influence within the institution was crucial in commissioning or accepting Jovanović’s work. Jovanović himself considered his collaboration with Neda Depolo to be a rare and happy occasion, given her devotion to art.⁷ Together, they realized the work *Duž duge, duge ulice* (*Along the long, long street*) in 1979, awarded with Premio Ondas.

The first major recognition for Jovanović was Prix Italia for *Krajputaši* (*Tombstones along the road/Roadside Tombstones*) in 1971. Jovanović did the piece with sound designer Marjan Radojčić. It was awarded in the category of stereophonic work, the last piece to do so before the category was abolished when stereophony became standard (Antonucci 1998, 95). Jovanović received the RAI Prize at Prix Italia again in 1977, with *Resavska pećina* (*Resava cave*) (ibid., 111). In the following years, Jovanović received many other recognitions for his works.⁸

The creation of *Resava Cave* was the first instance of experimental radio-⁹phonic collaboration between Jovanović and Zoran Jerković. Jerković went on to become one of the most sought-after sound designers and one of the initiators and first two lecturers (with Rihard Merc) of the Department for Sound Design at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade. Jerković was certainly Jovanović’s favorite collaborator, as he explains: “As far as sound designers go, I have only one: it is Zoran Jerković. The others used to vex me a bit, they were very stiff” while Jerković had “the absolute understanding” (Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview). This collaboration spanned years and only decreased when Jovano-

6 Those are *Krajputaši*, *Resavska pećina*, *Najeзде*, *I optekoše me vode do duše*, *Vila zida grad*, *Razumevanje zvuka*, *Kremansko proročanstvo*, *Uspenje*, *Ostrvo umirućih magaraca*, *Zaboravljeni anđeo iz Matere* (Malavrazić 1999, 26).

7 He illustrates this by recounting that she was in the habit of leaving written comments and thoughts on the works she heard earlier in the day in the postbox at the author’s home address, so the author could read them in the morning (Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview).

8 Among those are Premio Ondas for *Resava Cave*, Grand Prix Radio France International for *La parata* (with Ilinka Čolić Jovanović), Prix Acustica International for *Faunophonia Balcanica* and others (Jovanović 2025, 503–504).

9 Their overall first collaboration was for a classical radio play and happened in 1974. Incidentally, this was Jerković’s first sole credit as a sound engineer (not as an assistant to Marjan Radojčić, which he was still formally at the time).

vić started working digitally in the 1990s.¹⁰ Jovanović valued Jerković's contribution as highly as that of Neda Depolo. When working abroad, Jovanović found that he missed his frequent partners. In addition, he appreciated the more generous approach in the studio time slots allotted to authors in Radio Belgrade,¹¹ as opposed to various studios abroad where time slots were limited to only few hours a day and a few days in total. This meant that he had to prepare the work a few months in advance to finish it in the studio (Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview). Since the 1980s, Jovanović regularly collaborated with radio art programs of many radio stations across the world. Among those are WDR, ORE, Radio France, YLEIS, ABC, IRNA etc.

Since 1985, Jovanović's works for Radio Belgrade were primarily produced for *Radionica zvuka* (*Sound Workshop*). The initiation of the serial by Đorđe Malavrazić (then the chief editor of Radio Belgrade Drama program) was strongly influenced by Jovanović and other pioneers of research radio art in Radio Belgrade in previous decades, as well as their international successes. Ivana Stefanović, composer, one of those pioneers of Radio Belgrade's experimental radio art herself and the first editor of *Radionica zvuka*, stated that the series was "consequence of something that was well under way at Drama program and at Radio Belgrade in general. The authors were dedicated to sonic explorations" (Stefanović 2019, unpublished interview). Stefanović underlines the international successes of Jovanović, along those of innovative directors such as Darko Tatić, Boda Marković, composer Vladan Radovanović and others, "were valid arguments for the establishment of *Radionica zvuka*. It gave us the sense of self-confidence. We believed that we are valuable in the field of radio creation and that we already have our own place" (ibid.).¹²

However, not all those authors had the same ideas on sound experimentation, especially if the result was an "abstract" form of radio art, in the liminal

10 Jovanović remembers being gifted computer with ProTools program (the program he continued to use later) from Robert Adrian, who was, along with Heidi Grundmann, Jovanović's close friend (Jovanović 2025, 409–410).

11 As Đorđe Malavrazić explained, time slots were "material value" that Radio Belgrade could afford to offer to its authors and to invest in. Experimental radio production did not require budget for writers and actors and thus was overall financially more achievable (Malavrazić 2019, unpublished interview; cf. Maglov 2022, 270–272).

12 For the full list of winners up to 2005 see Ćirić 2005. In 2017, Ivana Stefanović was awarded *Prix Italia* for *Veliki kamen*.

space with electronic and concrete music.¹³ For example, esteemed radio director and professor of Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Darko Tatić, was himself prone to the experimental form but “strived to art in which semantic dimension was more developed” (Malavrazić 2019, unpublished interview). Tatić referred to the art that *Radionica zvuka* set to institutionally nurture as “jovanićevština” – art in the line of Arsenije Jovanović’s style (ibid.).¹⁴

POETICS OF ARSENIJE JOVANOVIĆ

Jovanović’s art corresponded to what Klaus Schöning defined as acoustic art or *Ars Acustica*:

a new and important art form, which often branches out within and without the medium of radio, roaming among the other arts in search of its own identity play fully trying out combinations with nontextual language, nonverbal articulations, quotation, original sound, environmental noises, acoustic objects *trouvé*, musical tones, electronic technology, and with the art of montage and collage right up to the structuring of multiple-day acoustic events known as “composing the radio” – as well as with the conversion of radio so to speak in to an intercontinental AudioSpace Lab, *ArsAcustica International* (Schöning 1991, 312).

The experiment practiced by Tatić, for example, started from the “traditional”, semantically oriented radio drama, while Jovanović’s work was conceptually and aesthetically coming from the sphere closer to Schöning’s ideas – those focused on the acoustic art.¹⁵ In this sense, the reference to “experiments”¹⁶ in the context of the productions that are closer to acoustic art is, in Schöning’s mind, wrong,

13 In Radio Belgrade, radio works were generally divided into (traditional) radio drama, documentary drama and “abstract” radio art.

14 More on of *Radionica zvuka* in Maglov 2022, 265–271.

15 Schöning used the term *Ars Acustica* rather than radio art. As shown in the quotation above, he insisted that what started as acoustic art within the bounds of radio did not necessarily stay in those bounds, and had the history that was not always limited to research in radio sound. I am still using the term “radio art” as I see it as more broadly oriented (i.e. not limited to Schöning’s conceptualization) to different concepts of art in radio, such as that of Heidi Grundman (*Kunstradio-Radiokunst*) with whom Jovanović often collaborated. More on the differences between those concepts in Rataj 2010.

16 As for Jovanović’s attitude towards experimenting, he states confusion at something being called the experiment, since he considered as such every encounter with a creative problem (Lazić 2008, 73).

as it indicates it as the experimenting “on the periphery of radio drama proper” instead as art with its own, separate history (1991, 308).¹⁷

Jovanović’s artistic statement clearly puts sonic qualities in equal line with semantic ones:

I argue for the music, art of sonic shaping as a medial discipline, the sound whose origin would be in the medium itself, joined together with the agency of words in creation of mental images as equal, and not accompanying actor, no matter whether it represents or not the value separated from artistic whole (Jovanović 1985, 63).¹⁸

This equal role of word and sound comes as a belief that radio should not be and is not “service” to literary and music works (cf. *ibid.*, 71), but an independent medium in which the author thinks through music and sound – i.e. through acoustic qualities of the medium – rather than through words (cf. *ibid.*, 61). Thinking and expression in acoustic means have priority for the artist and are expressed when he is asked to explain his works. The mere idea of communicating through words, when the composition exists in another medium and already communicates, is puzzling for Jovanović, as he asks: “Why I must use the words reinterpreting something what is supposed to be interpreted and explained by itself in principle, where from the words deliberately were banned? Can’t I communicate with my audience merely through the language of sound?” (Kunstradio 2007). A similar sentiment is brought forward in notes on *Les Vents de Camargue*, imagined as a part of acoustic impressions of a traveler to Provence. Jovanović explains: “I prefer writing with sounds instead of words, in acoustic territories the imagination has more space, it is easier for me to get rid of those realistic details every passenger inevitably keeps with him as worthless cargo. An acoustic road sign is an open invitation for more free roaming [...] I was thinking: would it be possible – instead of writing a script, a verbal diary – to write by sound?” (Kunstradio 2000).

In his recounting of the influences on the formation of acoustic art, Schöning mentions “extraordinary roles” played by Pierre Schaeffer¹⁹ and Pierre Henry, as

17 For the genealogy of acoustic art in Schöning’s sense, see Schöning 1991.

18 This attitude makes Jovanović the kind of author that Schöning had in mind when writing about those writers-composers-directors who “expanded the inventory of artistic tools available and put them to new tests” (1991, 321).

19 Gerald Fiebig notices that roots of Schaeffer’s exploration of sound served as an impetus in the recontextualization of Hörspiel during the 1960s and 1970s (2015, 204).

well as John Cage (1991, 318). Jovanović does not recognize the direct influence of John Cage on his poetics. He explains this with the example from his practice: when he knocks on different objects, or makes sound in other ways using everyday objects, trees, walls, rocks etc., he doesn't consider this to be the music (cf. Maglov 2022, 257). This process for him means gathering of the material "in order to make music of the concrete elements from the living ambient" (ibid.; Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview).²⁰

Jovanović was closer to the poetics of Pierre Schaeffer. He recalls being gifted Schaeffer's record, and credits it as changing the way he thought about music and sound (ibid.).²¹ For example, Schaeffer's ideas on "pure listening" and decontextualization of sounds (Schaeffer 2017, 64–69) were close to Jovanović, and his preference to hide the sources of sound are sometimes explicitly stated.

For Schaeffer, the production of the sound is not separated from its reception (cf. 2017, 14, 16, 69). In line with this, Schöning's idea of the listener is that of the co-author, co-player, correspondent (cf. 1969, 7). For Jovanović, the music – or any sonic art for that matter – is "created as much by the one who listens, as much as the one who composes" (Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview). Similarly, the story is created "only insofar as the listener's own experiences and associations are triggered" (Schöning 1991, 322). Jovanović calls this process a creation of "mental images" in the mind of the listener.

20 Jovanović met Cage during the latter's visit to Belgrade and appearance at the BITEF festival. Jovanović recorded Cage playing with museum objects at the Museum of Contemporary Arts. The several-hour footage was edited to the TV report and broadcast that evening, while the next morning the tapes were used for another recording, according to established practice (Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview).

21 Jovanović's work was also perceived in line of *musique concrète*. For example, upon seeing his TV movie *Vrtovi predgrađa* (*Gardens of suburbs*), music writer Pavle Stefanović noticed that "the whole sonic repository in it was actually from the domain of *concrete music* [italic P.S.]" ([1980]1982, 306). See the movie sample at Kunstradio 2013. Another example is Jovanović's inclusion at the festival Music in Serbia, whose edition in 1991 was dedicated to electroacoustic music. Jovanović presented *Island of the Dying Donkeys*, which selector Vladan Radovanović counted among the compositions "close to concrete music, with prominent programmatic intentions" (as noted in the program booklet). Jovanović was not a formally trained composer, which was evident in the situation when, for example, composer Enriko Josif was called upon to write down the score for *Krajputaši*. In this context, Jovanović's identification as a composer could be questioned. However, his inclusion by the contemporaries (such as Radovanović) and later authors (see Medić 2020, 248–249) among composers clearly show that the musical education and avoidance of more traditional compositional techniques was not considered an impediment.

Starting from the custom to name the recipients in theatre and in front of television sets – viewers, and those beside radio receivers – listeners, Jovanović states that they are all actually “viewers-listeners” (1985, 62). As he further explains, the moment radio enjoyers receive sonic information, they become “viewers”, as their imagination creates mental images, blurring the lines between sound and image (*ibid.*). “The art of radio is all in those mental images”, and the uniqueness of the medium is “building those images with words, music, sound and totality of sonic language” (*ibid.*). Even the smallest sound effects, when not just delivering information, “can play the significant role of poetic reagent in creating mental images” (*ibid.*, 68). Jovanović compares the radio directing with the communication with a blind person, where everything is sound, but everything points to the image that should “resurrect” in the mind of a listener (Lazić 2008, 73).

The possibility of radio makes it, in Jovanović’s opinion, the “most poetic or most deep medium. The image is the closure of a process, surface of things. [...] Things begin much earlier, much deeper, in some far, maybe only slightly indicated springs governed by sound. The life could be represented through breath, heartbeat. [...] And breathing, circulation, sonic images of some basic things and contents have much wider, deeper and more provoking meaning and, of course, depending on the imaginary power of the one who listens, they can be seen in thousands different ways” (Lazić 2008, 73). The director, as a co-author, collaborates with a listener in a way he would collaborate with a writer in a different setting of roles (*cf.* Jovanović 1985, 67). In practical ways, this means that Jovanović has a listener in mind during the process of creating a montage. He illustrates this with an example of a montage, when there are several “lines” of material, each on its own channel. Their movement and overall correlation depend on the perceptive abilities of the listener, and the director’s role is to design that correlation as to be receivable in a way that will not tire the listener, but that will please them and provoke their curiosity (*ibid.*).

Having in mind this concern for the listener, and the crucial role they are given, one of the most consistent lines of thought that Jovanović expresses is a reluctance to offer a preferred interpretation of his works. Sometimes he even goes as far to refuse disclosure of a synopsis or an initial idea, although this is not something he practices in every one of his compositions, given that sometimes he will share the inspiration, the idea or the material used. The origins of this

distaste for explanation might come from the practices of socialist culture, as Jovanović says that it reminds him of “the time when I was a theater director and inevitably had to explain my concept to the cast, or – even worse – to the authorities, the dreaded apparatchiks. [...] Our apparatchiks were milder than their Soviet colleagues. Nevertheless, the apparatchik syndrome remains embedded in my memory as a chronic, incurable frustration. It triggers in me a kind of will for revolution and an aversion to having to explain the concept of my work” (Kunstradio 2012). Another layer of association when explaining the work in words is the feeling of being “a market dealer” (ibid., 2012). Jovanović has called his work “anti-librettistic”, even stating that he believes “that a libretto is not written for intelligent people, but for those who either lack imagination or are intellectually sluggish” (Kunstradio 2015). In general, Jovanović thinks that composers of radio art in its more abstract form “should be forbidden to speak about their works” (Kunstradio 2019). He goes on to give an example of Becket, as one of those who refused an explanation of his own works.²²

However, it seems that the most consistent motivation, in line with his attitude on the formation of mental images, is that: “I don’t want to influence your imagination, I want you to have your own imagination as a listener, even if you take the road I don’t want” (Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview). This attitude is present in many liner notes. For example, in notes for *Approaching*, Jovanović states that “the content is too abstract to be explained by words”, as he thinks that “the only right way is to let the listener to ‘discover the content’” and hopes “that any sensitive listener will have mental pictures and personal thoughts while listening the piece. Nothing else is more important than this” (Bandcamp 2021a). The explanation of composition itself is sometimes considered as dangerously close to the destruction of “precious rich and unlimited listeners’ imagination” (Bandcamp 2021b). This is the case in the comment on *Kremansko proročanstvo* (*Prophecy of the Village Kremna*), which should be recreated in the listener’s imagination and “reborn in a new way with each individual listener separately” (ibid.). In other instances (notes on *AquAgonia*), Jovanović even contemplates the title as a sort of brutality:

I used a single word though, a neologism I put as the title of the work

22 Perhaps coincidentally, Becket’s play was the first Jovanović production for the Radio Belgrade Drama program (see Donić and Rajić 2004, 98).

not missing to admit that even this sole word-no-word did some... brutality to what I want to achieve. Maybe brutality is no right word – you see how a single word could provoke confusion! – to say instead, how even an innocent title, unless it is totally abstract, trigger the listener's imagination to start working, before the very art piece start working itself - what I find not so good since I don't want to make any influence to my audience beforehand, not even with the title, being abstract or not (Kunstradio 2007).

His belief is that withholding information from the listener is like a gift: “when a listener discovers the secret of my work, its foundation, then I'm giving the listener a gift by not disturbing their free perception with explanations” (Kunstradio 2016). In the case of *Rorschach Test RP 4*,²³ title (“or rather, the non-title”) directly references the inkblot Rorschach Test and indicates the possibility of composition evoking “very personal reactions in the listener, based on their own history, imagination, and personality” (Kunstradio 1990).

RECEPTION

Jovanović does not remember that radio art received much attention in terms of written reviews, just the impression about compositions he heard during conversations (Jovanović 2019, unpublished interview). In addition to the views offered by Neda Depolo on his overall importance in the field of radio art and comments on few works (Depolo 1999), there is Pavle Stefanović's essay upon viewing *Vrtovi predgrađa*, with an appreciation of Jovanović's audio-visual achievement (Stefanović [1980]1982, 303–307). Radio critic Raško V. Jovanović wrote on Jovanović on several occasions (since 1995 to 1997), predominantly on Jovanović's work as a director on various poetry and radio drama projects noticing Arsenije Jovanović's “almost unbounded sonic space of poetry and building of special sonic dramaturgy on a wide (and deep!) stereophonic level, which works very stimulating on listener's perception” (2010, 167). The exception

23 “RP 4” in the title indicates the ORF digital studio where Jovanović realized the composition in 1990 (Kunstradio 1990). In the following year, Jovanović led the workshop in a then new digital studio, together with ORF sound engineer Gerhard Wieser. Participants were visual artists, composers and writers, who were invited to produce their pieces in the studio. As Daniel Gilfillan notices, the organizing principle of the workshop was artist-centered, with artist expertise at the center and horizontal approach to the production of radio art which he further understands in the genealogy of Hörspiel (2021, 172).

in terms of writing about radio art works Jovanović was best known for came with two reviews of *Resava cave* and one of *Uspenje (Ascension)* (ibid., 72, 87–88, 296). In addition to praising the thematic and technical achievements of *Resava cave*, Raško V. Jovanović stressed the importance of bringing forward the notion of nature and preservation of its beauty (ibid., 87–88). Musicological comments on Arsenije Jovanović are few (Kara Pešić 1995, Kotevska 2015, Pardo Salgado 2017, 2018, Maglov 2022), especially those that are entirely or predominantly dedicated to the analysis of his work. Ana Kara Pešić's review of Jovanović's compositions included in CD editions from 1993 and 1994 (see Discography) and Carmen Pardo Delgado's analysis of *Concerto Grosso Balcanico* (2017, 2018) are rare in that sense.

Jovanović is often mentioned, in the context of soundtrack of Terrence Malick's movies (Pippin 2013, Sterritt 2011, Ashvo-Muñoz 2015, Wierzbicki 2019, Fijo 2020). Malick first used *Prophecy of Kremna* in his 1998 movie *Thin Red Line*. This collaboration came as a surprise to Jovanović, as he was contacted by Malick's producer for permission to use his work. He learned that Malick heard *Prophecy of Kremna* when it was broadcast on American Public Radio (Jovanović 2025, 454). In the following years, Malick used Jovanović's works in all his movies, with one exception.²⁴ Commenting on the composers of various pieces of music Malick selects for his music (ranging from Bach and Handel, to Pärt and Schnittke), Alberto Fijo notices that they “share a dimension of religious transcendence or at least are intensely transcendent in the pieces Malick selects” (2020, 204). On Jovanović specifically, the same author notices that his music is “penetrated by the sensibility of orthodox Christianity that lives the mystery in a very peculiar way, different from the Christianity of the Latin rite” (ibid., 205). James Wierzbicki sees Jovanović's works used as “dark markers” in Mallick's movies, the sounds that are “more indicative of disturbance, and thus at least potentially more disturbing”, although they are “so quiet, and so neatly woven

24 Malick used *Prophecy of Kremna* again in *To the Wonder* (2012), *The Tree of Life* (2011) and *Knight of Cups* (2015). Other Jovanović's works in Malick's movies are: *Faunophonía Balcanica*, *Sound Testament of Mount Athos*, *Ma Maison* (in *Tree of Life*), *Sogno di un Automobile*, *In Search of Galiola*, *Farewell Mix from an Old Fridge before It Sank into the Sea* (in *Knight of Cups*), *Tombstones along the Roadside* (in *Voyage of Time: Life's Journey*, 2016), *Cave of My Ancestors* (in *Voyage of Time*, 2016), *Tamni Damari*, *Magma Psalm* (in *Song to Song*, 2017), *Concerto Grosso Balcanico*, *The Little Faust* (in *A Hidden Life*, 2019), *Approaching* (in *Tree of Life*, *Knight of Cups*, *Song to Song*, *A Hidden Life*), *Searching for a Serene Sphere* (in *Knight of Cups* and *Song to Song*) (IMDb, n.d.).

into the soundtracks, that audience members are not likely even to notice them” (2019, 90).

In a sense, we could understand Terrence Malick as a very specific “viewer-listener” of Jovanović’s works. Jovanović once called an actor an above average reader, which offers a new interpretation of the text (1985, 65). Perhaps we can call Malick an above average listener of Jovanović’s works, one that shares contemplative pace and fondness for complexity of nature and man’s relationship to nature with Jovanović’s own thematic preoccupations²⁵ and the one whose mental images embody the poetic world of their own.

MAPPING JOVANOVIĆ’S RADIOPHONIC WORLDS

Perhaps we could begin our journey through the radiophonic worlds created by Arsenije Jovanović by exploring those compositions that are preoccupied with nature and animals. Atmospheric sounds of birds, crickets, frogs, winds blowing, waters flowing, and leaves rustling are found in many of his works, positioning the listener in the soundscape. There are, however, several compositions whose titles and contents indicate topics related to nature (*Okeanide*, *Four winds*, *Petrified Rivers*, *Spirit of Water*) or to animals (*Island of the Dying Donkeys*, *Faunofonia Balcanica*, *Svetilište kitova*, *The Trace of the Fish*). In works on the natural world, and especially on animals, Jovanović demonstrated the position of empathy. He used the sonic means as a storytelling device which would, in a sense, give voice to animals, or at least try to imagine the world from their perspective. This seems to be the case with several compositions seemingly inspired by the same event. Jovanović recounted how the little bird landed on his ship in the Adriatic, and he felt it ran away from the Balkan boiling unrests that would lead to war

25 Fijo writes on Malick: “Related to the music in this film, the sound of the human voice is blended with the sound of nature (the famous four elements, so present in Malick’s films: water, earth, wind and fire) and with the sound of things created by man (a bell, the engine of a vehicle, the noise made by a sickle when cutting barley).” (2020, 205). This is of significance when thinking about points of resonance between Jovanović and Malick – as we will see, nature is the core element of Jovanović’s poetics. However, we can also notice the same “blend” of human voice, sound of nature and man-made objects that Fijo points out in Malick’s choice of music, when we listen to Jovanović’s sound collages. In addition, the first point of encounter (in art) of the two authors was motivated by the war epic *Thin Red Line*, with a strong anti-war message. As Jovanović noticed, it seemed as his and Malick’s worldviews had something in common (Kozlovački Damjanov, Wierzbicki 2019, 91).

(*The Fear of the Birds, The Souvenirs from Marchés aux Puces, Liturgy for a little bird, Birds in Rifle Barrels*).

Beside this comment from the bird's perspective, war topics and anti-war sentiment were expressed in several radio art works by Jovanović: *Krajputaši, Homo politicus vulgaris, Concerto Grosso Balcanico, The White City, La Parata, Schutt Parade, Cathedral's Fall War Opera, Balcan Chirps – Balkangezwitscher*. Jovanović was drawn to the topics of war since his earliest works. *Krajputaši*, his first Prix Italia winning piece, was described as “a requiem for the victims of war based on the search for a new relationship between the human voice, noise and music” (Antonucci 1998, 95). *Concerto Grosso Balcanico*, perhaps Jovanović's work discussed in the most detail (see Pardo Salgado 2017, 2018), referenced the baroque music form in its three clearly marked movements, and its play between two “orchestral” groups. In a completely different way, Jovanović used musical development in *The White City* by referencing the music-rhythmic motive. While we cannot identify overt musical analogies or distinct “melodic” qualities in every work, this particular piece demonstrates how rhythmic patterns and melodic repetitions form the foundation of its sonic narrative. Affective qualities of the political speeches and treatment of voices and speeches as sound samples were at the center of the exploration in *La Parata*. *Schutt Parade* deals with women as a constructive force as opposed to the male destroying impulses obvious in wars. This was addressed through sonic stories of women who collected rubbish after the Second World War in Germany and Austria.

Jovanović created *Metropolis Belgrade*, a sound portrait of the Yugoslav capital at the time, for the famous *Metropolis* series, edited by Schöning. This creation is a collage of excerpts from different sound walks: from the city's parks and nature, local markets and streets with conversations from random passersby, “overhearing” of an orchestra rehearsal, and the Belgrade nightlife in Skardalija Street, to the stadium where football games are played. *Metropolis Arl* was another one of Jovanović's contributions to Schöning's series, demonstrating the versatility he had in painting different cities' portraits, and his sensibility towards the acoustic environment. This could also be heard in works such as *Soundbook of a Traveller II* (another sonic visit to Belgrade) and *Laguna Venezia*. Jovanović preferred creating “acoustic travel diaries”, in lieu of written ones, as he stated with the creation of *Vents e Voix de Provence* (Kunstradio 2020) and similarly of *Les Vents de Camargue* (Kunstradio 2000). Caves and tunnels were

places of continuous acoustic fascination for Jovanović. *Resava Cave* certainly holds a special place in that regard, being an early work in which Jovanović pioneered his sonic experiments in the acoustic space of the cave. *Cave under the Sea* and *Cave of my Ancestors* continue this exploration. Jovanović saw a similar capacity for interesting acoustic results with tunnels, exploring it in works such as *Tunnels inside of a tunnel*, *Broken stalactites* from the *Triptychon* “*Caves & Tunnels*” and *Midsummer night's dream in Tunnel Dubovica on Island of Hvar*.

Sound Testament of Mount Athos is created of the recordings made in and around monasteries in Eastern Orthodox religious center, both ambient sounds and the music of the monks. It is another example of making an “acoustic travel diary”, but this time more connected to another topic that seems close to Jovanović – that of religious and folk songs, prayers, customs and imagery. *Opera Balcanica* deals with variety of songs around Balcan, similarly to *Balcan Chirps – Balkangezwitscher*. *Vila zida grad* is dedicated, as mentioned earlier, to the work of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić on collecting folk poetry and stories. *Uspenje* thematizes the eponymous religious motif. In *East West Dialogue*, Jovanović juxtaposes Persian and German music and poetry.

There are many other topics dealt with in Jovanović’s opus that counts to more than 70 works (see Appendix). It is interesting to note how many different occasions, environments or situations sparked Jovanović’s imagination and served as an impetus for creation. *Archipelago Prospero* draws an interesting illustration of the differences between Jovanović’s primary profession as a theatre director and the vocation of radio artist, while drawing on the experience of directing for the stage. Mainly, the work is based on William Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*, but not on its driving narrative. Instead, it draws on references to sound in dialogue, descriptions of the scenes and technical instructions, thus creating the sonic world implicitly present in Shakespeare’s text. Everyday objects and their sounds were used in *Zhuangzi’s cup of tea* and *The Souvenirs from Marchés aux Puces*. The refrigerator became almost an object of a poem, and a testimony of the artist’s ability to find beauty and poetry in at the first glance banal situations, such as the “death” of a refrigerator that served his family through three generations (*Farewell Lament for an Old Family Fridge before it sank into the Sea*). *Ma Maison* is the dreamlike ode to the artist’s house in Rovinj, which does not deal with its real sounds, but the sonic explorations of the memory and feeling that one’s home evokes.

Finally, in this tracing of Jovanović's radiophonic worlds, we can go back to the beginning: to Galiola. *Igra za jednu Galiolu*, created in 1967, which is Jovanović's first radiophonic piece. Galiola is a name of an island in the Adriatic on which the author landed on a stormy and dangerous day. Thus, he named many of his ships in the decades afterwards Galiola. As there are many ships, there are several radio art works bearing this name: *Farewell Prayer for one Galiola*, *The Unfinished Diary of the Sailing Ship Galiola Nuria*, *Sound logbook of the s/s Galiola*, *Auf Kurs nach Galiola*. At the same time another acoustic travel diary and exploration of a natural environment, works on Galiola are Jovanović's attempt to get closer to the unreachable, something that is for him beyond words. At the same time extremely detailed in subtleties of sonically building an inner experience, and elusive when it comes to explaining and stating the meaning of his works, Jovanović seems to be the author whose listeners are yet to come, together with the more nuanced interpretation of his radiophonic works.

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ARSENIJE JOVANOVIĆ: PORTRET RADIOFONSKOG UMETNIKA (rezime)

Arsenije Arsa Jovanović (1932–2025) jedan je od najznačajnijih srpskih i jugoslovenskih radiofonjskih umetnika međunarodne reputacije. Svojim pionirskim delovanjem na polju eksperimentalne radiofonije („apstraktne“ radiofonije, Ars Akustike), zajedno sa drugim stvaralocima ove umetničke forme, utabao je temelje radiofonjskom eksperimentu u okviru Radio Beograda i njegovoj institucionalizaciji u vidu serijala *Radionica zvuka* (1985). Aktivan i zapažen kao pozorišni i televizijski reditelj, pisac putopisa, novinskih eseja i knjiga, autor fotografija i video instalacija, svojevremeno i profesor na Fakultetu dramskih umetnosti u

Beogradu, Jovanović je izazivao pažnju svojim beskompromisnim umetničkim delovanjem i političkim stavovima, te su njegove aktivnosti redovno praćene u medijima. Ipak, naučni članci, posebno oni posvećeni radiofonskoj umetnosti kojoj je pretežno bio posvećen u kasnijim decenijama svog stvaranja, retki su, a obuhvatan pregled njegove karijere, ostvarenja, autopoetičkih stavova i recepcije, do sada je izostao. U svojim autopoetičkim napisima, Jovanović se zalagao za „umetnost zvučnog oblikovanja“, za zvuk koji nastaje u samom mediju i zajedno sa rečima potiče stvaranje „mentalnih slika“. Zbog ovog fenomena, Jovanović slušaocima naziva „gledaocima-slušaočima“. Poput Pjera Šefera, čija je konkretna muzika i umetnost zvučnog kolaža bila presudna za njegovo sazrevanje kao zvučnog umetnika, Jovanović je potencirao dekontekstualizaciju zvuka koji se sluša, kao i ulogu recipijenata. Prema njegovom mišljenju, muziku i bilo koju zvučnu umetnost podjednako kreiraju oni koji slušaju, kao i oni koji komponuju. Zbog čega nije želeo da opširnim pojašnjenjima inicijalnih ideja kompozicija, ili sopstvenog stvaralačkog postupka, utiče na imaginaciju slušalaca, smatrajući da im time oduzima kreativan aspekt doživljaja dela. Pisana reč muzikologa i kritičara o Jovanovićevim kompozicijama, kako je to već naznačeno, bila je retka. Značajan broj studija u kojima se pominju Jovanovićeva radiofonska dela, primarno se bave filmovima američkog režisera Terensa Malika. Malika, zapravo, možemo smatrati izuzetno senzibilnim „gledaocem-slušaočem“ Jovanovićevih ostvarenja, a između njihovih poetika možemo uočiti snažnu rezonancu. Ona, između ostalog, počiva i na sličnom senzibilitetu za određene teme, poput odnosa između čoveka i prirode, te anti-ratnog senzibiliteta. U svom opusu (koji čini preko 70 kompozicija), Jovanović je ispoljio posebno interesovanje za životinjski svet (*Ostrvo umirućih magaraca, Faunofonija Balkanika, Okeanide*), za pećine (*Resavska pećina, Midsummer night's dream in Tunnel Dubovica on Island of Hvar*), ratna zbivanja i njihovu kritiku (*Concerto Grosso Balcanico, Schutt Parade*), zvučne pejzaže i akustičke putopise (*Metropola Beograd, Metropola Arl, Les Vents de Camargue*), folklornu i religioznu tematiku (*Zvučni testament planine Atos, Vila zida grad, Uspenje*), ali i brojne druge teme istraživane u pojedinačnim ostvarenjima (*Archipelago Prospero, Farewell Lament for an Old Family Fridge before it sank into the Sea, Ma Maison*). Ipak, uvek se vraćao temi Galiolje – jadranskog ostrva i brodova kojima je dodelio ovo ime – a koja je srž njegove prve radiofonske kompozicije (*Igra za jednu Galiolu*). Mapiranjem Jovanovićevog životnog i stvaralačkog puta, autopoetičkih stavova, te radiofonskog opusa,

u ovom tekstu se daje portret umetnika čiji bogat i kompleksan opus zaslužuje pažljiva slušanja i interpretacije.

APPENDIX: LIST OF WORKS BY ARSENIJE JOVANOVIĆ

Year	Title	Sources ²⁶
1967	Igra za jednu galiolu / Prayer for one Galiola	RB; CD: FO A RM Projects – FO A RM / and/OAR / Alluvial Recordings
1971	Krajputaši / Roadside Tombstones / Tombstones along the Roadside	RB; BC; CD: FO A RM Projects – FO A RM / and/OAR / Alluvial Recordings
1977	Resavska pećina / Resava Cave	RB; BC; CD La Légende Des Voix – LDV008
1978	Najeзде / Invasions	RB; BC; CD La Légende Des Voix – LDV008
1985	Razumevanje zvuka	RB
1986	Halejeva kometa	RB
1986	Vila zida grad	RB
1987	Metropola Beograd – Grad gradila b'jela vila	WDR / RB
1988	Ostrvo umirućih magaraca / The Island of the Dying Donkeys	RB; BC; CD La Légende Des Voix – LDV008
1989	Zvučni testament planine Atos / Sound Testament of Mount Athos	WDR / RB; BC
1990	Kremansko proročanstvo / Prophecy of the Village of Kremna	New American Radio, NYC; BC; CD: FO A RM Projects – FO A RM / and/OAR / Alluvial Recordings
1990	Uspenje	RB / ORF
1990	Faunophonia Balkanica	WDR; LP Astres d'Or – d'or 74

26 By sources, author has in mind the websites or physical carriers. Where known, production is stated. German radio stations which produced Jovanović's work are stated per Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, 2025. The abbreviations are as following: RB – Radio Belgrade; ORF – Österreichischer Rundfunk, WDR – Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln, BC – bandcamp, RTS – Radio Television of Serbia. The archive is listed by the information author found in books (Donić and Rajić 2004), or on websites (Kunstradio, n.d.; Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, 2025; Bandcamp, n.d.; IMDb, n.d.). CD and LP editions are stated per author's Discogs page (Discogs, 2025a), except for the edition Riverrun, listed separately (Discogs, 2025b). Editions are listed in the table per their catalogue numbers, while complete information is given in the Discography. When composition could be found both on websites and physical carriers, both are stated in the column. Bandcamp editions are all released in 2021, regardless of the date of actual production (which is discerned per other sources, where available). In three cases, titles of bandcamp compilation editions are stated in the table, while the compositions included are given in footnotes. Composer's last finished work, *Orison*, is stated per Radio Belgrade's announcement (RTS, 2008–2025).

1990	Zaboravljeni anđeo iz Matere / L'Angelo Dimenticato di Matera	RAI
1990	Klavierabtabsten	RB / ORF; BC
1991	Homo politicus vulgaris	ORF
1992	Svetilište kitova	RB
1992	Hautnah	ORF
1992	Metropolis Arles	WDR; CD WER 6307-2
1993	Le Sacre du Mal	RAI – RADIOUNO RB
1993	Pariska etida i hidrofoniija – diptih	RB
1993	Ma Maison	Radio France; BC; CD La Légende Des Voix – LDV008
1993	Concerto Grosso Balcanico	ORF; BC; CD ORF – 14782131274
1993	Laguna Venezia	WDR
1994	Formula 1 – The Art of Noise	ORF
1996	Ohne Titel	WDR
1996	Balcan Chirps - Balkangezwitscher	Sender Freies Berlin / Radio Belgrad
1997	The White City	ORF; BC
1997	La Parata (co-authored with Ilinka Čolić Jovanović)	Deutschlandradio
1999	The Trace of the Fish	Sender Freies Berlin / Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg
2000	Les Vents de Camargue	ORF; CD: FO A RM Projects – FO A RM / and/OAR / Alluvial Recordings
2001	The Fear of the Birds	ORF
2001	Opera Balcanica	ABC radio
2001	Soundbook of a Traveller I	WDR
2003	Farewell Lament for an Old Family Fridge before it sank into the Sea	ORF; BC
2003	Four winds	BC
2003	Soundbook of a Traveller II	Deutschlandradio
2005	Schutt Parade	ORF; BC
2005	Birds in Rifle Barrels	Deutschlandradio; BC
2006	Archipelago Prospero	Radio Educación Mexiko / Deutschlandradio / Radio Belgrad; BC
2007	"Toast to Radio" – Live from Belgrade	RB; BC
2007	AquAgonia	ORF
2008	Forever Young - Gypsy party in a Turkish bath	ORF; BC
2009	Approaching	RB
2009	Auf Kurs nach Galiola	Südwestrundfunk
2011	East West Wind Dialogues	ORF; BC
2011	Little Faust	ORF
2012	Okeanide	ORF
2013	The Souvenirs from Marchés aux Puces	ORF
2013	Tunnels inside of a tunnel	ORF

2014	„Broken stalactites“ from the Triptychon „Caves & Tunnels“	ORF; BC
2014	Midsummer night's dream in Tunnel Dubovica on Island of Hvar	ORF; BC
2015	Cathedral's Fall War Opera	ORF; BC
2016	Coreografie dell'invisible	ORF; BC
2017	Farewell Prayer for one Galiola	ORF; BC; LP Astres d'Or – d'or 74
2017	Zhuangzi's cup of tea	Deutschland Radio; BC
2018	From C to A	ORF
2019	Smog	ORF
2020	Vents e Voix de Provence	ORF
2020	The Art of Speech (For Ana)	LP Pentiments – PEN007
2021	Prolepsis, tuning instruments	ORF
2021	Sound logbook of the s/s Galiola	BC
2021	Five electro-acoustic miniatures - Diamond, dedicated to Terrence Malick ²⁷	BC
2021	Present from Arsenije for Arts Birthday	BC
2021	Liturgy for a little bird	BC
2021	Trans DADA Belgrade Express	BC
2021	Prolepsis 440	Deutschland Radio; BC
2022	The Unfinished Diary of the Sailing Ship Galiola Nuria	ORF / Český rozhlas
2023	Avis vestigia in Mare Tranquillitatis	ORF
2023	Sailboat Galiola Nuria's Unfinished Logbook	LP Pentiments – PEN015
2024	Orison	RTS
	H.P.V.	Ylesradio
	Les Vents de Camargue	ORF; BC
	Petrified Rivers	BC
	Spirit of Water	BC
	Steps under the Cathedral	BC
	Lullaby for the Little birds	Adriatic Sound Factory
	Tamni damari – Dark pulses	BC
	Sound Book of a Traveler, 1st book ²⁸	BC
	A lost necklace with five small pearls ²⁹	BC
	Magma Psalm	IMDb, n.d.
	Searching for a Serene Sphere	IMDb, n.d.

27 Includes: *A little Lullaby for a bird and some other little Creatures, AquAgonia or Death of the Water, Faunophonia, Hydrophonia, Une lettre electro-acoustique de Provence.*

28 Includes: *Cave under the Sea, Athos Zauberber, Cave of my Ancestors, Cricket under the Cathedral.*

29 Includes: *AquAgonia, Faunophonia Balcanica, Hydrophonia, Les Vents du Camargue, Lullaby for the Little Birds.*