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BULGARIAN MUSICOLOGY – RETROSPECTIVES AND PERSPECTIVES. OPENING

The conference was occasioned by the seventieth anniversary of the Institute of Music with a Museum, whose successor is the Department of Music, Institute of Art Studies, BAS. The sessions on the opening day, 9 February (10:30 am – 4:30 pm), were held in the Auditorium of BAS, and on 10–11 February (10:30 am – 4:30 pm), at the Institute of Art Studies.

Forty musicologists from the Institute as well as from other Bulgarian institutions (National Academy of Music, Sofia; Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, Plovdiv; University of Sofia; University of Turnovo; South-West University, Blagoevgrad) and from abroad (Germany, France, USA, Canada, Russia, Serbia, Macedonia) delivered papers.

PROGRAM

10:00 – 10:30 Откриване

Водещ: чл. кор. Светлана Куюмджева

Поздравителен адрес от акад. Юлиан Ревалски, председател на Българската академия на науките

Приветствие от доц. д-р Емануел Мутафов директор на Института за изследване на изкуствата – БАН

Връчване на наградата „Съживеното наследство“ на ИИИзк за 2017 г.

Приветствие от акад. Васил Казанджиев

чл. кор. Светлана Куюмджиева
Връчване на наградата „Съживеното наследство“, доц. д-р Емануел Мутафов и акад. Васил Казанджиев
Връчване на поздравителен адрес от Нов български университет, доц. д-р Героги Арнаудов и доц. д-р Емануел Мутафов

Поздравителен адрес от НМА „Проф. П. Владигеров”, връчен от проф. д-р Наташа Япова
BULGARIAN MUSICOLOGY – RETROSPECTIVES AND PERSPECTIVES. DAY 1

PROGRAM

10:30 – 12:00 Първо заседание
Седем десетилетия
10:30 – 10:45 Горица Найденова 70 години музикологична общност в БАН
10:45 – 11:00 Кристина Япова По следите на изгубената общност
11:00 – 11:15 Любен Ботушаров Десетилетия сравнително музикознание в Института за музика
11:15 – 11:30 Венцислав Димов Във фокуса на ретроспективите и перспективите на българската етномузикология (за първите стъпки и големите крачки с почит към първооснователите на музикалнофолклорната секция на Института за музика
11:30 – 11:45 Елисавета Вълчичнова-Чендова 40 години списание „Българско музикознание“
11:45 – 12:00 Дискусия
13:30 – 13:45 Иванка Стоянова Фолклорни влияния в западноевропейската музика от втората половина на ХХ век насам
13:45 – 14:00 Patrick Becker Contemporary Music without Theory?
Bulgaria’s Musicology and its Relation to the Bulgarian avantgarde 1944 – 1974
14:00 – 14:15 Ангелина Петрова Авангард, постмодерност и фолклор - режими на интерпретация след 60-те години на ХХ век.
Българската и източноевропейската ситуация
14:15 – 14:30 Юлиан Кюмджиев Творческа свобода и идеологически натиск – авторски рефлексии, документирани в архива на Лазар Николов
14:30 – 14:45 Дискусия
15:15 – 16:30 Трето заседание
Изследователски подходи
Водещ: Ангелина Петрова
15:15 – 15:30 Милена Божикована Музикалнотеоретичните изследвания на Светлана Захари-
errors

15:30 – 15:45 Снежина Врангова Музикалният анализ в България в светлината на ХХІ век. Съвременни фигури, приноси и актуални очертания на научната област

15:45 – 16:00 Полина Антоноева Композиторският архив като предмет на историческото музикознание

16:00 – 16:15 Росица Тодорова Българската фолклорна монодия като обект на полифоничната наука

16:15 – 16:30 Дискусия

Горица Найденова 70 години музиколожична общност в БАН

Кристина Япова По следите на изгубената общност
Любен Ботушаров Десетилетия сравнително музикознание в Института за музика

Венцислав Димов Във фокуса на ретроспективите и перспективите на българската етномузикология (за първите стъпки и големите крачки – с почит към първооснователите на музикалнофолклорната секция на Института за музика)
Елисавета Вълчинова-Чендова 40 години списание „Българско музикозна-ние”

Иванка Стоянова Фолклорни влияния в западноевропейската музика от втората половина на ХХ век насам

Ангелина Петрова Авангард, постмодерност и фолклор — режими на интерпретация след 60-те години на XX век. Българската и източноевропейската ситуация
Юлиан Куюмджиев Творческа свобода и идеологически натиск – авторски рефлексии, документирани в архива на Лазар Николов

Милена Божикова Муzikалнотеоретичните изследвания на Светлана Захариева: подходи, идеи, приноси
Снежина Врангова Музикалният анализ в България в светлината на XXI век. Съвременни фигури, приноси и актуални очертания на научната област

Полина Антонова Композиторският архив като предмет на историческо-то музикознание
BULGARIAN MUSICOLOGY – RETROSPECTIVES AND PERSPECTIVES.
DAY 2

PROGRAM

10:00 – 11:30 Четвърто заседание
Етномузикология на български терен
Водещ: Михаил Луканов

10:00 – 10:15 Donna A. Buchanan
Sviri-Govori: Narrativity, Sonic Ecology, and the Kaval’s “Meden” Voice

10:15 – 10:30 Irene Markoff
Reflections on the Construction of AleviBektashi Rituals and Ritual Space in the Transnational Perspective: Performing Spirituality, Navigating Identity

10:30 – 10:45 Румяна Маргари­това
Изследванията върху малцин­ствена музика в Института за музи­ка при БАН

10:45 – 11:00 Мария Кумичин
Музикалнофолклорният архив на Института за музика в ретроспекция

11:00 – 11:15 Диана Данова-Да­мянова
Теренни музикалнофольк­лорни проучвания в Казанлъшко през шестото десетилетие на ХХ век

11:15 – 11:30 Дискусия

13:00 – 13:15 Наталия Рашкова
Традиционни и съвременни ин­терпретации на музикално-танцов фолклор в градска среда (унгарски реалности)

13:15 – 13:30 Гергана Панова-Текат
В крак с времето: нови пара­дигми и теоретични постижения на българската етнохореология

13:30 – 13:45 Лозанка Пейчева
Авторски песни в народен дух: щрихиране на феномена

13:45 – 14:00 Marija Dumnić
History of Urban Folk Music practices in South Slavic Countries

14:00 – 14:15 Деница Попова
Му­зикалната автентичност – между за­губа и обогатяване

14:14 – 14:30 Галина Лукано­ва
Певческите групи за обработен български фолклор – от „отстъпле­ние от традицията” до „маркър за национална идентичност”

14:30 – 14:45 Дискусия

15:00 – 16:15 Шесто заседание
Музика и културни взаимодействия
Водещ: Румяна Маргаритова

Водещ: Венцислав Димов
Естрадната песен и нейните критики (1960 – 1990)
15:15 – 15:30 Юлиана Папазова
Алтернативната рок сцена в Македония и България
15:30 – 15:45 Андрей Лешков
Чавдар Мутафов и другите (бележки за музиката пред свършека на мисълта)
15:45 – 16:00 Милена Шурулова
Краудсорсинг и възможностите му за привличане на публики за музикална продукция
16:00 – 16:15 Дискусия

Donna A. Buchanan
Sviri-Govori: Narrativity, Sonic Ecology, and the Kaval’s “Meden” Voice

Румяна Маргаритова
Изследванията върху малцинствена музика в Института за музика при БАН
Мария Кумичин Музикалнофолклорният архив на Института за музика в ретроспекция

Диана Данова-Дамянова Теренни музикалнофолклорни проучвания в Казанлъшко през шестото десятилетье на XX век

Наталия Рашкова Традиционни и съвременни интерпретации на музико-танцов фолклор в градска среда (унгарски реалности)
Marija Dumnić  History of Urban Folk Music practices in South Slavic Countries

Лозанка Пейчева  Авторски песни в народен дух: щрихира̀не на феномена
Деница Попова Музикалната автентичност – между загуба и обогатяване

Галина Луканова Певческите групи за обработен български фолклор – от „отстъпление от традицията“ до „маркер за национална идентичност“
Розмари Стателова Естрадната песен и нейните критици (1960 – 1990)

Юлиана Папазова Алтернативната рок сцена в Македония и България
Андрей Лешков Чавдар Мутафов и другите (бележки за музиката пред свършека на мисълта)

Милена Шушулова Краудсорсинг и възможностите му за привличане на публики за музикална продукция
BULGARIAN MUSICOLOGY – RETROSPECTIVES AND PERSPECTIVES.
DAY 3

PROGRAM

10:00 – 11:30 Седмо заседание: Църковна музика
Водещ: Явор Генов
10:00 – 10:15 Светлана Куюмджиева Старата българска музика в пресечната точка на различни традиции
10:15 – 10:30 Галина Алексеева Theory of the Orthodox singing and Bulgarian Musicology
10:30 – 10:45 Nataša Marjanović The Research of Orthodox Church Music in Bulgaria and Serbia in the Second Half of the 20th Century
10:45 – 11:00 Стефка Венкова Изследователски подход към музикалното дело на Николай Иванов Николаев (1852 – 1938)
11:00 – 11:15 Юлиан Одажиян Богослужебна употреба на Великото Славословие
11:15 – 11:30 Дискусия
13:00 – 13:15 Явор Генов Да кажеш нещо различно е да кажеш нещо различно
13:15 – 13:30 Стефан Далчев Музиката на барок в българското музикознание. Съвременна или историческа интерпретация
13:30 – 13:45 Сабин Леви Сложна фуга
13:45 – 14:00 Дискусия
14:15 – 15:30 Девето заседание: Музикален театър
Водещ: Кристина Япова
14:15 – 14:30 Емилия Жунич Оперознанието в изследователска група „Музикален театър“. Ракурси
14:30 – 14:45 Анелия Янева 90 години балетно изкуство в България. Постановъчни и изпълнителски практики. Изследователски проекции
14:45 – 15:00 Румяна Каракостова 100 години професионален оперетен театър в България. Постановъчно-изпълнителски опит и рекертоарни тежнения
15:00 – 15:15 Миглена Ценова-Нушева Тенденции при рецеп-
Светлана Куюмджиева
Старата българска музика в пресечната точка на различни традиции

Nataša Marjanović
The Research of Orthodox Church Music in Bulgaria and Serbia in the Second Half of the 20th Century
Стефка Венкова Изследователски подходи към музикалното дело на Николай Иванов Николаев (1852 – 1938)

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Стефан Далчев Музиката на барока в българското музикознание. Съвременна или историческа интерпретация

Сабин Леви Сложна фуга
Емилия Жунич Оперознание-то в изследователска група „Музикален театър“. Ракурси

Анелия Янева 90 години балетно изкуство в България. Постановъчни и изпълнителски практики. Изследователски проекции
Румяна Каракостова 100 години професионален оперетен театър в България. Постановъчно-изпълнителски опит и репертоарни тежнения

Мигlena Ценова-Нушева Тенденции при рецепцията на жанра мюзикъл в България в периода 1963 – 2013
A surprising stage version of Albena (By Krasimir Spasov, Bulgarian Army Theatre)

Kamelia Nikolova
Co-publication with Literaturen Vestnik weekly

Albena
By Yordan Yovkov
Director: Krasimir Spasov
Set Designer: Krasimir Vulkanov
Costume Designer: Maria Dimanova
Sound Designer: Sasho Mladenov
Premieres: 13, 16 March 2018, Bulgarian Army Theatre

Just days ago a challenging new staging completed the variety of ambitious theatrical productions on the bill of Sofia of the recent months. Following the premieres of Ivan Viripaev’s ‘Delhi’ Dance at the National Theatre, Sofia in the rendition of Galin Stoev (appointed as new director of Théâtre National de Toulouse early this year); the stage adaptation at 199 Theatre of Milen Ruskov’s latest novel Çamkoria and Viripaev’s The Drunks at Small City Theatre ‘Off The Channel’ by Javor Gardev; the newly staged British plays Hangmen by Martin McDonagh at Sofia Theatre and Cock by Mike Bartlett at the Youth
Theatre that have been premiered for the first time ever in this country by directors Stoian Radev and Staiko Murdzhev and, last but not least, the one-man production in the vein of the stand-up comedy *I'm Iva. Nice to Meet You!* by Iva Todorova at 199 Theatre; Krasimir Spasov has put on Yovkov’s *Albena* at Bulgarian Army Theatre. *Albena* is believed to be among the most significant and challenging works of Bulgaria’s dramatic heritage.

The production provides the perfect complement to the wide-ranging repertoire of Sofia stage of today, mentioned above, in two directions. On the one hand, the director convincingly presents professionally and masterly made traditional theatre, revealing the world of the dramatic text, particularly, of an emblematic Bulgarian classic dramatic work. (It is important to specify here that inert and routine productions in the aesthetic of traditional theatre rendering dramatic texts abound in this country, but the real thing is a rare occurrence and Krasimir Spasov is among the acknowledged makers of such rare occurrences). On the other hand—and that’s what makes it so important an achievement—he offers a new and never attempted interpretation of Yovkov’s play, which has attracted over the decades the attention of many of Bulgaria’s best directors (Nikolay Massalitinov, 1929; Krikor Azarian, 1969/1975; Luben Grois, 1975; Plamen Markov, 1980; Ivan Dobchev, who staged it several times, last in 2002).

Generally speaking, the interpretations of Yovkov’s poetic and immersive drama about the *exceptionally easy on the eye* Albena, about her sinful love that has led to a crime, from its first 1929 staging by Nikolay Massalitinov at the National Theatre to its latest renditions would embark either on more naturalistic or more conventional reenactment of a long gone patriarchal way of life and the tensions smouldering within between the individual and the community and the established order or on the disclosing of the main archetypal situations and principles of human life and societies. Krasimir Spasov, also a significant figure in Bulgarian theatre directing, has now, by the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, unearthed yet another important layer of the text, left almost unnoticed until now, which I’d define as sociological. In the interpretation of the director and his crew, pretty Albena is first of all just as much the real as the imaginary, passionately dreamt of image of the new, modern, free and economically successful world. It, of course, does not override the
eroticism of her presence, bringing to light the hidden libidinal impulses behind human existence in the balancing between the instinctive desire and reasoned choice. Rather, this inherent eroticism comes complete with the surrounding her people’s aspirations for prosperity and personal success. In such a sociological reading, the complicated attitudes of the community towards Albena, combining both irresistible attraction and sober distancing evolving at times into hatred (i.e. conflicting, mutually exclusive emotions, which are though experienced and harboured jointly, in a tragic unity) acquire a new clarity. Instinctively feeling (and building on through their own yearnings) the breath of another dreamt of life in the free, beautiful and different Albena, all of them are spontaneously seeking her, but at a rational level they more or less get back to their established existence, back to what is available and verified and giving them a sense of security.

To bring such a generally sociological reading of the play to the fore, making it crystal clear, Krasimir Spasov shifts the historical time of the action from the pre-war years of the early twentieth century to the late 1930s, a period of strong economic growth in Dobrudja, when
the patriarchal agricultural past was rapidly replaced by the industrial and urban cultures. Albena as a symbol of this new world (both invented and desired and actually permeating through the whole old life) of machines, beautiful clothes and delight in everyday life imparts quite a different type of beauty. She is not just the naturally prettiest belle (emanation of femininity), clad in the traditional local garments like everyone else, which, however, only accentuate her beauty, but is, first and foremost, a curious and open to the novelties girl, free and self-reliant enough to keep up with the latest fashion trends of the 1930s as much as possible. Albena in the rendition of Krasimir Spasov and the company of Bulgarian Army Theatre is a slender, tall and elegant young woman donned in the typical of the age silk flapper drop-waist dresses, complete with a neat small parasol (a traditional accessory carried by women in the cities and by the daughters and young female relatives of the wealthy landowners). What should be by all means underscored here is the taste and the careful forethought in this significant, I’d call it historic, change in (the permanently established view of) Albena’s costume of actress Gergana Dandanova in the title
role and costume designer Maria Dimanova.

The interpretation and building of attitudes of the community, of the men and women from the village, towards Albena is a defining interpretative key to the play and Krasimir Spasov is strict and laconic here. In the light of his predominantly sociological reading, he conducts a kind of a check before the eyes of the audiences of the varying degrees of aspirations and striving for a free and successful life in a modern, economically developed and open world of each character as well as of their sober thinking, sense of duty, but also of their fear to break free from what is established and well known through their intimacy with Albena. The director here accentuates the under-commented detail of her relationships with the men from the community smitten with her. In various periods, she has been close in one way or another to all of them (she refused to Niagul seven years ago; Gavril wanted to marry her, but took into consideration his family’s ban from marrying her, etc.), then this intimacy was cut off to be then renewed or re-established at a new level. Niagul, who is the most successful and most vigorously striving for the new modern industrial world has a secret affair with Albena, but in his everyday life continues to stick to his established ways until forced to announce his choice after the crime. Gavril, in his turn, after making a compromise, has opted for a dual existence secretly longing for Albena, but outwardly existing reservedly within the surrounding world. This analysis of the degree of intimacy with Albena as a touchstone of the inner ambivalence of the characters has become the focal point of the production and is especially well performed by Veselin Anchev as Niagul, Asen Kobilarov in the challenging role of Kutsar, and Ivan Radoev as Senebirski. Careful and precise in studding the line of closeness-remoteness from Albena are also Louisabell Nikolova, Vladislav Violonov, Ivan Nalbantov, Yordan Alexiev, Stanislava Nikolova.

A challenging and surprising rendition of Yovkov’s Albena, which not only takes us back to the vitality and drama of a rapidly developing Bulgaria striving to join the modern world on the eve of World War 2, but also sounds quite relevantly even now.
Bulgarian legends have it that the kingdom of fairies (*samodivas*) is a mythical land far, far away where the sky and ground merge into one. They would come here on 25 March (the Feast of Annunciation) and leave on 29 August (the feast day of John the Baptist). They may fall in love with a lad or lure a shepherded into playing to them. The next morning, the grass where they have danced barefoot is left charred and the shepherd boy has gone insane after what he has seen. One can catch and keep a fairy if stealing her veil: she becomes a human girl and can take human men for husbands.

But one should never give her veil back or else she’d fly away joining her sisters forever. The fairies would more often than not take revenge by blinding the guys who had stolen their love away. The word *samodiva* would rather mean self-admiring or a deity in herself, while the *samovilas* i.e., running wild or a whirl in herself, are believed to be unfriendly to humans, but the dividing line between the former and the latter is rather blurred.

The production of Kazanluk Drama Theatre performed in Sofia on 22 February offered a different ending.

The crew includes Mara Boneva, director/puppet designer; Svetlin Ivelinov, co-director/choreographer; Ivan Boiadjiev, set/costume designer; music adaptation by Milen and just two actors and four actresses. They play it all the roles: both the real characters, the lad Ivan and his Mother, the lasses and

A Fairy at the Russian Centre of Culture and Information, Sofia

Anelia Yaneva
the lads on the village green, the gossipmongers and Ivan’s flock of sheep and the fantastic characters of the three fairies, the Eagle that takes Ivan up into the wonderland, the animals, birds, whirls flown over by the Eagle.

A pitfall of staging such a fairytale lies in drawing a dividing line between the world of the real and that of the wonderland. Mara Boneva’s imagination is especially conducive to this: the incorporeal supernatural beings are given puppet heads in Bulgarian folk tradition and long veils wrapping around their arms to create an impression of levitating above the ground; the Eagle has white cloth for wings, a head made from twisted sticks, very similar to yokes to carry pails on, and cowbells for eyes. The attributes used to design the world of the real and that of the fairies are all-Bulgarian: the cowbells, kerchiefs, shawls, veils, canvases, fences, sheep are made form sticks and veils. Just two spreading oaks also constructed of canvases along with a sloping practicable form the set of the production, while the rest—houses, windows, whirls—are assembled together using rods, hayforks and cloth, arranged in various manners.

The ability to assemble a different world of what you have
at hand is really very impressive. The entire production exudes Bulgarian air both in the spoken text, the storyline and the used attributes. The Bulgarian character of the tale about the lad who takes the Fairy’s veil to make her his wife is accentuated. And even another tale is added to this one: after giving her veil back, the Fairy flies off to her world and as Ivan sets off after her, the Eagle lends a helping hand, taking him up into the wonderland.

Yet, the ending is different. Instead of the traditional reading, where fairies gouge out the lad’s eyes so that he may never be able to see them again, the authors from Kazanluk have opted for another interpretation, extolling love. The Fairy helps Ivan escape her sisters and the Eagle carries them back to the lad’s village on its wings. Ivan again gived her the veil, but she throws it into the flames, while dancing around the fire, raising an association between them and fire dancers. Interestingly, Ivan’s mother performs the same movements as though she herself wants to put the veil on her own head. This scene apparently suggests in both its directing and choreography that Ivan’s mother possibly was a fairy before she had her son and also chose human love over
Eagle’s wings, the Fairy asks the lad if he loved her, but the Eagle warns him: ‘Don’t turn around to look back at her, lad, don’t answer her, or else you’d lose her forever.’ When they land, Ivan tells her: ‘You want to know whether I love you? I don’t know, lassie. If Love is like that magic stealing your dream from you, taking your breath or stabbing your heart like a knife, making your heart ache or killing you, or letting you soar in the sky… Well then, yes, I do! I am destined to give that Magic to you!’

The spoken text built primarily of direct speech does not weigh on the performance and choreography is a continuation of the world of the fairies, staying in the village. Then hers was not an isolated case, but rather an opportunity for everyone to catch, keep and domesticate one’s own fairy.

‘We all have our Fairy deep in our hearts, desperately craving for her, readily setting off for ultima Thule to find her, but how many do have the courage and are capable of grasping her tightly and keeping her not forcibly, but lovingly, making her fall madly in love, leaving everything behind to follow you?’

There are also associations between the couple and Orpheus and Eurydice: while flying on the Eagle’s wings, the Fairy asks the lad if he loved her, but the Eagle warns him: ‘Don’t turn around to look back at her, lad, don’t answer her, or else you’d lose her forever.’ When they land, Ivan tells her: ‘You want to know whether I love you? I don’t know, lassie. If Love is like that magic stealing your dream from you, taking your breath or stabbing your heart like a knife, making your heart ache or killing you, or letting you soar in the sky… Well then, yes, I do! I am destined to give that Magic to you!’

The spoken text built primarily of direct speech does not weigh on the performance and choreography is a continuation.
of the speech, rather than being solved as dances in a theatrical performance. It is this synthesis of speech and choreography is definitely and achievement due supposedly to the equal presence of the co-directors. Apparent is the shared idea and their zeal for the same direction. Most impressively, this is a plastic production, where movement logically stems from word, which in its turn intertwines into the plasticity. Dances and words are inseparable. This symbiosis is substantiated by the performers, young and very devoted, though neither of them has received any professional dance training.

**Peter Petrov** (Ivan) studied at NATFA, as did **Beatrice Blagoeva** (a fairy), **Svetlana Burgazova** (Mother) and **Mara Boneva** (co-director and a fairy); **Ivelina Pavlova** (the Fairy) studied at SWU, while **Sava Dragiev** (the Eagle) completed **Luben Grois Theatre College**.

The real world is skilfully demarcated from that of the fairies in co-director Svetlin Ivelinov’s choreography by keeping the all-Bulgarian air, but without using folk borrowings in the dance. The dividing line rather lies in the tempo-rhythm and the character of the movements: the dance of the real-world characters is more
broken and with more poses, presented slightly ironically, while that of the fairies and the love duets—before the Fairy flies away and after the hero finds her again—are much more plastic, cantilenal and without sharp edges.

The dance of the Fairy around the fire before she throws her veil into the flames is different, dream-like and the same holds true for that of the Mother, who is craving for the veil and once again gives up on it. In this, the veil becomes a symbol of the Fairy’s soaring up freely in the sky, sacrificed for the sake of her love for the boy.

This production eludes the magic of Bulgarian traditions and the finale seems to open doors to the real power of love even in the fantastic fairy world.

The project came to fruition with the support of Iskra 1860 community centre in Kazanluk. The performance showed for an umpteenth time that theatre should never be classed as belonging to the capital or to the country, but as traditional and such promoting capturing ideas and enthusiasm, which is something to be proud of, regardless of where it is played. I express my admiration for Kazanluk Drama Theatre for taking up the challenge to stage innovative, unconventional productions!

1 The theatre programme.
2 The theatre programme.
Zakharieva, Deputy Prime Minister for Judicial Reform and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria. In this context, opting for works by composers from various national cultures[1] and a young Bulgarian soloist making a successful international career was a very wise choice. Conductor Petko Dimitrov designed the second part as a triptych of a kind of pieces by Jean Sibelius, Arvo Pärt и Bedřich Smetana. The idea the three orchestral opuses—Lemminkäinen’s Return (from Lemminkäinen Suite, Op. 22), the Silouan’s Song and Blanik from Má Vlast (My Fatherland)—to be performed at one sitting, without intervals between them, had its dramaturgic grounds, seeking in all likelihood to make a soft culmination of a kind of the Bulgarian premiere of Silouan’s Song composed in 1991.

The opening 2018 concert given by the New Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Petko Dimitrov on 24 February 2018, drew into Bulgaria Hall both admirers of the Orchestra and professionals, lured into coming by rarely performed or even Bulgarian premieres of some of the pieces on the programme. The event was dedicated to the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and held under the auspices of Ms Ekateriana Zakharieva.
As a whole, we were involved in a concert brimming over with emotionality and content, where every member of the audience found a meaningful and emotional point of their own. I though choose here to accentuate an anticipated comeback on Bulgarian stage made by the young but confidently appearing on international stages cellist Michael Petrov, both as a soloist and member of the Isimsiz Trio. In 2016, he received an Artist Diploma in Performance from Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, winning at the same time prestigious competitions both in Bulgaria and abroad. For his performance of Concerto No. 1 for Cello and Orchestra by Shostakovich in 2014, Michael Petrov was awarded the School’s premier music prize Guildhall Gold Medal by Sir Andrew Parmley, Lord Mayor of the City of London in November 2017. He has given concerts under the Rising Stars programme STARS of the European Concert Hall Organisation and the Young Concert Artists Trust (YCAT), London.

I have heard him perform at the outset of his career of a promising student at Prof. Pancho Vladigerov National School of Music and my expectations of him coming back to Sofia with a nontraditional cello repertoire proved right.
Michael Petrov is an interesting, sensitive musician, living up to his own interpretational concept, but listening to the orchestra and responsive to conductorial gestures. The combination of deep emotionality and virtuosity renders him a special charm captivating the audiences. This goes true for the Bulgarian premiere of Cello Concerto, Op. 22 by Samuel Barber. Written in 1945 for brilliant Raya Garbousova and commissioned by Serge Koussevitzky, the dedicated to John and Anne Brown work is rarely performed due to its specific technical difficulty and the redaction designed for Garbousova’s individual specifics. Michael Petrov easily met the challenges and in a near-perfect synchrony with the orchestra, succeeded in rendering the special lyricism of the Concerto and suggesting its plentiful emotional and image content.

Judging by what he said after the concert, meeting Sofia audiences was long-awaited and exciting to the young cellist: ‘It was an exclusive privilege to play Samuel Barber’s Concerto with the New Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Petko Dimitrov in Bulgaria Hall. This work is rarely performed due perhaps to its great difficulty both for the soloist and the orchestra. New Symphony Orchestra were terrific, and it is up to the audience to judge me! I fancy Barber’s Concerto. It is interesting since its very beginning, with a unique second part and
abounds in dreamy melodies and unceasing rhythms. I was really happy when maestro Dimitrov agreed to perform it in Bulgaria Hall. Bulgarian audiences have always been among the warmest and the most intelligent. It gave me even greater pleasure to have the chance to meet with many of my teachers of the days when I studied at the National School of Music; with renowned musician, artists and persons; with my friends and relations, and with my classmates, who are now my worthy colleagues! I was very happy, indeed, for I have had the opportunity to love this stage ever since my childhood. I hope to meet oftener Bulgarian music and culture and to have the chance to play again in my country, for it is like nowhere else!’

¹ Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis by Ralph Vaughan Williams
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The Platform was designed as a specific and worthy alternative to critical reviewing concomitant with current cultural events, done usually by journalists, non-expert outsiders or admirers. What we have here are publications by researchers and experts in fine arts, music, drama, film, architecture and cultural studies (in accordance with the research areas and the accredited courses of the Institute of Art Studies), as well as critical commentaries by professionals on hot issues in the aforementioned cultural and art fields, requiring specialised response, interpretations and personal statements by authors.