

OPINION

By Prof. Dr. Goritsa Naydenova, Institute of Art Studies, BAS

On the dissertation

AMBIENT MUSIC FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CENTER – FUNCTION, TYPOLOGY AND GENRE INTERACTIONS

For awarding the educational and scientific degree Doctor / PhD

to ANGEL DIMITROV SIMITCHIEV

Doctoral student at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS

The dissertation work of Angel Simitchiev has a total volume of 188 standard pages and has the following structure: Introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The bibliography includes 80 titles that have been used, but here one should also add the great number of sources, such as video (7) and audio materials (120 studied and included as a basis for the work albums in the researched sphere). The text fully complies with the formal requirements for a dissertation for acquiring the scientific and educational degree "Doctor". As a doctoral student Angel Simitchiev has realized 2 publications, another two have been accepted for publication. The abstract properly presents the contents of the dissertation.

The choice of the research topic fits quite natural the development of Angel Simitchiev, as his previous artistic activities are mostly related to the field of applied music (to art installations, theater productions, performances, etc.), as well as his experience in the field of music journalism. However, the text itself lacks any autobiographical elements, which I highly appreciate - the study was carried out entirely from the necessary research distance and with a desire to cover and make sense of the most important aspects of the phenomenon. Given the many "borderlines" of this phenomenon (it is on the border between direct listening and background music, between conceptual and applied music, between "easy" music, and such that requires effort, etc.), which in many cases means to be present on both sides of each of these boundaries, perhaps as the main and best completed task of this dissertation should be derived precisely in the presentation of its diversity. In fact, this is the first time the phenomenon of "ambient music" has been introduced as an object in Bulgarian research, and to some extent this is evidenced by the fact that the literature mentioned as used is almost entirely in the English language.

The need to present the phenomenon in its entirety and in its most important aspects determines the structure of the dissertation, as well as the way it is presented. Thus, the first chapter is dedicated to the emergence, differentiation and development of ambient music with its various tendencies, its ideology, its social positions. Drawn out here is one of the essential characteristics of the work in the field of ambient - the specific relationship between the creator of this music and technology. All these lines, presented as subheadings in the First chapter, are followed in the Second chapter, and actually appearing as a facet, deepens and concretizes what is set out in the section "Studio and Composer" in Chapter One. The key factor here is the attempt to systematize the tools for creating ambient music. Each of the meanings of an "instrument" in my presentation can be valid, as it concerns: 1) the sound material that becomes the basis of its tissue, and which in many, but not all cases are derived from acoustic or electronic musical instruments and 2) for the means by which this sound material is treated (as here "means" can be read in both senses - of technical devices and of the compositional methods themselves). I would rate this chapter as central and most relevant to the study. The Third chapter - again without missing the threads laid down in the First chapter - outlines the most popular trends in ambient music and its position in relation to neighboring and not so neighboring trends. The latter is revealed in two ways - one is through the cases in which a certain trend in the ambient passes into the field of another trend, and the second - when inherent features of the ambient are found outside its own field. Such a section could become a kind of roadmap for the fields of action of background, electronic and electroacoustic music, rock music, new age, etc., if not for the fundamental problem of too much uncertainty of the boundaries between them. The last Fourth chapter builds on what has been learned in the previous three and attempts to predict the prospects of development for ambient music.

The text of the dissertation is based on diverse sources, including both scientific research and reflections and self-reflections of participants in the field of ambient music (authors /performers or fans) in a wide range of annotations and reviews of albums, through interviews, autobiographical books and articles and even discussions in Internet forums. All these levels are present in parallel throughout the presentation, which often leads to the feeling that the trend is self-presenting and that the reflective (research) and narrative (stories of the participants) layer are tightly intertwined. On the other hand, such constant attention to the intentions of the authors of ambient music is a serious evidence-based basis, which gives the reader the opportunity to make their own interpretations and systematizations. On the other hand, this provides the dissertation with a kind of unity, very similar to the apparent statics of the studied music itself, that is, in some sense the text corresponds to its object.

I would recommend that in the eventual publication of the dissertation special attention be paid to the type of terminology used, as it has entered the author's vocabulary mainly through English-language sources. Some of the terms already have their own established translations or transliterations in publications in Bulgarian and so the placement of

ambient music in a certain Bulgarian musical or music science tradition would be more convincing. In other cases, the music-theoretical terminology in Bulgarian science is more nuanced than in English-language literature (the most visible example is the difference between "tone" and "tonal" in Bulgarian musicology, which does not exist as separate word forms in English).

Aside of this note, I think that the dissertation presents in many ways and in many layers a phenomenon not considered so far in Bulgarian research in its entirety. The dissertation - mostly through the well-found structure of the text - clearly identifies the main problems facing the researcher in the study of such objects, and is able to offer a comprehensive approach to solving them, combining work both in terms of social functions of the ambient music, as well as its technical and technological aspects. The text is unified, dense and extremely informative, mainly due to the large number of known to the author and introduced by him sources (text and music).

Based on what I have presented as qualities of the dissertation, I will vote positively for awarding the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" to Angel Simitchiev.

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Sofia

Signature:

(Goritsa Naidenova)