

OPINION

By Prof. Dr. Kremena Angelova

National Academy of Music "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov"

On the dissertation of Angel Simitchiev

Ambient Music from the Periphery to the Center-

Function, Typology and Genre Interactions

For receiving the educational and academic degree Doctor

Scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art

Professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art

Academic supervisor Prof. DSc Christina Yapova

Angel Simitchiev got his bachelor degree in *International Economic Relations* at the University of National and World Economy and has a master degree in *Media Composition and Electro-Acoustic Music* at the National Academy of Music "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov". Since 2013 he lectures "Sound Art" at the National Academy of Art. From 2017 he is a doctoral student at the Institute of Art Studies – BAS.

He has also been active as a musician (part of the Bulgarian booking team and label for experimental electronic music Amek) and as composer of media music for theater, contemporary dance, live performances, video installations, exhibitions, advertising, fashion.

Simitchiev is the author of the music for "Vision" (live electronics) performance of Tsveta Doycheva and Supromat (2020); "Hold on" (music) contemporary dance, Tsveta Doycheva (2020); "Natura Morta" (music) documentary theater, Mladen Alexiev (2018); Chronologist (sound design), puppet theater, Ezekiel Garcia Romeo (2018); "Displace" (sound design) video installation, Kalin Serapionov (2016); "Bloodthirsty" (music), contemporary dance, Philip Milanov (2016); "Museum Of Less Ordinary" (music), exhibition (2015) etc.

Angel Simitchiev's dissertation consists of an introduction, 4 chapters, conclusion and bibliography (which includes also videography and discography) with a total volume of 142 pages. The work represents a complete and a rather comprehensive study of ambient music by referring to works and authors from all periods of genre's development and not only the most significant and famous ones.

The contributions of the study are given in the abstract where in an extremely concise manner (16 pages) manages to present the idea of the qualities of the overall text. In it we can note the four publications on the subject made in the period 2020-2021.

The Introduction gives a brief historical overview of the *ambient* genre and indicates the objectives, methodology and structure of the dissertation. Indicated also is the place of *ambient* music in Bulgaria - still as part of the musical underground, which justifies the need for academic research on the topic.

Chapter One traces the emergence and establishment of *ambient* as part of contemporary musical reality and seeks the reasons for this in a historical and technological aspect. The author demonstrates broad knowledge in the field of music, fine arts and technologies, while at the same time expressing this in a fascinating and interesting manner. In this chapter a clear definition of ambient as “atmospheric music”ⁱ is offered that does not follow the musical canons of form, structure, rhythm and harmony”, “breaks the notions of time and has its own rhythm”. The author also emphasizes the particularly important role of technologies in the creation of ambient music, which in turn sets specific requirements for composers in the genre.

Chapter Two examines in detail the different tools that *ambient* uses, as well as the different approaches for creating ambient music since the genre emerged till the present day. The author defines as "sources of sound material" not only the characteristic for the genre acoustic and electronic instruments and voice but he also includes the authentic terrain recordings of different atmosphere, sound effects created through sound design as well as the artistic treatment of different technological, production and performers manners. In this context the author again directs our attention to the musical language of *ambient* and the role of the different musical elements in it – melody, harmony, rhythm, time. Underlined is the key role of technologies in the process of creating art products. The text is based on research and analysis of an extensive selection of albums, as the main source of information are the comments of the authors, shared in various publications.

Chapter Three focuses on the varieties of the genre and its interaction and influence on other genres. The information is extremely detailed and describes in depth all subgenres and niche branches of *ambient*, characterizing them not only as specific sonority and impact, but also as a consequence of the subcultural affiliation of the composers and their individual searches. The connections of *ambient* with *musac*, *new age*, *nature music* and *easy listening*, as well as its interaction with *club music*, *black metal*, *jazz* and even *country music* are discussed. And here the professional expertise of the author in the field of different genres, knowledge of creative stimuli and the creative process can be clearly seen and show his interest in the subject matter.

The final **Fourth** chapter analyzes the state of genre at the moment and identifies trends for its development. The changes that occur in the genre due to the development of technology, as well as new applications of *ambient* in contemporary audio-visual arts, mobile applications, video games and even as part of concerts and festivals are commented.

Angel Simitchiev's work is an independent study with an undoubted contribution to the history and theory of musical art. The volume of the used literature is impressive, as well as the audio and video resources, which in themselves can serve as a starting point for new research on the subject. The systematization and analysis of materials and their introduction in the text allows a thorough examination of the research object and verifies the conclusions of the author.

In conclusion, I congratulate the doctoral student Angel Simitchiev and its academic supervisor Prof. DSc Christina Yapova, for a successfully completed dissertation and I propose to the respected scientific jury to award Angel Dimitrov Simitchiev the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field 8.3. "Music and Dance Art".

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ⁱ I would recommend the introduced in this chapter term "atmospheric" to be replaced with "atmosphere" or "ambient" which linguistically and professionally are more correct.