

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. ANDA PALIEVA

for the dissertation of

GERGANA DIMITROVA KOSTADINOVA

on the topic

BETWEEN CLASSICAL MUSIC AND JAZZ: STYLISTIC INTERACTIONS AND GENRE TRANSFORMATIONS IN BULGARIAN MUSIC IN THE LATE 20TH AND EARLY 21ST CENTURIES

Before I comment on the presented dissertation text, I would like to stress that it is the result of a long, versatile activity of Gergana Kostadinova as a performer, music author and researcher in the field of her chosen genre.

Her long professional training has taken her through piano studies at the Lyubomir Pipkov National School of Music and the National Music Academy “Prof. Pancho Vladigerov”, where she also graduated as a Master of Music in Tone Conducting, and then graduated "Pop and Jazz Piano" at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof. A. Diamandiev" in Plovdiv. During this period, she also participated in several master classes - of Tamara Padubnaya, Johannes Kropfich, Bernard Partz, Gottlieb Walisch, Natalia Trull, Naum Grubert, Fulvio Turissini, Paul Gulda, Yeno Yando, etc. She won scholarships to several summer music academies where she was an active participant - *San Daniele Piano Meeting* (Italy, 2011), *Wiener Musik Seminar* (Austria, 2010), *International Summer Academy Prague Wien Budapest* (Austria, 2009). Between 2017 and 2020 she was a full-time doctoral student at the Institute of Art Studies - BAS. And from autumn 2022 she is a lecturer of compulsory piano at the National School of Music "Lyubomir Pipkov".

During the last ten years Gergana Kostadinova has performed intensively in various cities in Bulgaria and abroad. She has already released three albums of her own music - "Shining" (2022), "Fulfilled Moons" (2021) and "A Day of a lifetime" (2020).

Both this serious professionalization and active creative realization give her a broad outlook and a platform as a researcher to consider musical phenomena in the genre space of jazz in a multifaceted way and to draw comprehensive generalizations.

The dissertation of Gergana Kostadinova intrigues with the title itself, pointing to a topic present to some extent peripherally in our contemporary musicology. The very first glance at the Table of Contents gives an idea of the clear and orderly structure of the work, built logically on the principle from the whole to the particular - from the general historical and terminological problematics, through the manifestations on the territory of Bulgarian music, to the individual stylistic characteristics of individual

authors and the consideration of specific works that have not been the subject of detailed musicological analysis so far.

The work comprises of an Introduction, four chapters, a Conclusion, four Appendices, a Bibliography (145 bibliographical items, of which 101 in Cyrillic and 44 in Latin), 61 Notated Examples, a Discography (90 titles) and a Videography, totaling 202 pages.

In the **Introduction** the author motivates the choice of her topic, formulates the aim, the main tasks, and the methodology of the study, stressing that in her dissertation for the first time an attempt is made to "*comprehensively systematize the works in the border zone between the so-called classical music and jazz, created at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century*" in Bulgaria.

What makes a nice impression here is the analytically evaluative view in the review of the literature used (which would also be useful for a wider audience in the eventual publication of the work), gathered reasonably in terms of volume and selection, with priority given to publications from recent decades reflecting the latest contemporary conceptions. And I would particularly stress the full active functioning of all the literature drawn upon in the text of the development.

In **Chapter One - Stylistic Interactions in 20th and Early 21st Century Music. Problematics and Terminological Aspects**, which lays the theoretical foundation of the development, the interactions and inter-genre synthesis in twentieth century music are traced in a broad historical perspective; the main terminological concepts functioning in the development are also specified (*jazz, third movement, crossover, ethno jazz, fusion, amalgams, cross fertilization, hybrid music confluent music*, etc.), and the introduction of the definition of the so-called classical music is particularly justified. Definitions of widely known concepts related to contemporary music (*atonality, dodecaphony, aleatoric, sonoristic*, etc.) are also provided, here specifically in relation to their entry into jazz composition.

The dissertation presents in detail the formulations and concepts related to jazz, its varieties, types of performance formations, stylistic features, specific authors and milestones, new trends and currents, etc. She traces all this in a historical progression, in parallel with global musical phenomena in the twentieth century, drawing on an impressive amount of Bulgarian and foreign musicological literature (often cited in her own translation). And as a summary, she draws out a laconic but accurate characterization of the postmodern situation, pointing out some new phenomena resulting from the interpenetration of jazz and the so-called classical music (revival of improvisation, expansion of the instrumentarium, rhythmic and timbral enrichment, experimentation with the new means of electronic technology, symbiosis between the arts, outgrowth of regional and national limitation, etc.).

Chapter Two - Jazz Music in Bulgaria. Manifestations of Synthesis between Classical Music and Jazz - brings Gergana Kostadinova's observations on the possible manifestations of synthesis between the means of the so-called classical music and jazz to a broad panorama of jazz art in Bulgaria. She traces with precision

the chronological development of jazz in Bulgaria and proposes a corresponding periodization. 1. *From the 1920s to 1948*; 2. *After 1948*; 3. *After the 1960s*; 4. *1970-1989*; 5. *After 1989*, conceptualizing the different periods through the prism of the specific personalities who created the jazz culture of their time and in the context of the specific political and socio-cultural situation of the respective period.

Naturally, not all phenomena at a given time could be put under one denominator. A special case is Pancho Vladigerov's music for Max Reinhardt's productions in Berlin and Vienna, a magnificent example of the infiltration of jazz elements into the classical score. Indeed, this music was composed in the 1920s and falls temporally within the first period indicated, but it can hardly be placed under the heading of ***Jazz Music's Entry into Bulgaria*** - it was born from a different sound environment and intended for the reception of a different audience, was unknown at the time in Bulgaria and had no influence on the development of jazz in the country at the time. Gergana Kostadinova has cleverly found a solution by separating ***Pancho Vladigerov's Theatre Music*** in a separate fragment as an example of an individual creative find of a Bulgarian composer, not as an element of the general picture of jazz art in Bulgaria in the 1920s.

The sections devoted to the periods after the 1960s are richly expanded, rich with the names of the bright, leading creative figures, established formations, and admired works - examples of the synthesis between the so-called classical music and jazz. New musical forms exposing the inter-genre synthesis are also mentioned - works for jazz formations and classical symphonic or chamber ensembles, musicals, fusion, ethno-jazz, theatre, and film music, etc. A special place is given to jazz festivals, with their individual programs, thematic and genre orientation, as an important forum for performances and presentation of the latest creative explorations. In this way Gergana Kostadinova has managed to outline in the gradation of the ever broadening horizons of jazz art in each subsequent period a full, multilayered picture, giving an idea of the historical evolution of jazz and the growing importance of its presence in the cultural life of Bulgaria.

Third chapter *Bulgarian musicians of the late 20th - early 21st century. Creative Outlook and Works*, dedicated to the creative portraits of 25 authors, is, in my opinion, the largest and most significant part of the dissertation, reflecting to a high degree the dissertator's own vision and research work. As she herself explains (p. 80), her aim was to comprehensively cover the Bulgarian musicians and their work in the field of interaction between the so-called classical music and jazz of the last three decades, presenting the specificity of the authorship of the musicians who make up the new sound environment. Here Gergana Kostadinova's ability of professional insight and appreciation of the individual work and at the same time it's fitting into the overall author's oeuvre and delineation of its individual characteristic, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the careful derivation of common features allowing generalizations about the global trends and tendencies in this period, clearly stand out. She has achieved all this in the dynamics of a multidirectional research work, linked both to the study of notational and sound material and to personal impressions

of concert events and the living relationship with the authors. Many of the interviews with them are included as Appendices at the end of the thesis, but they are of particular interest, add substantially to the artistic portraits painted here, and are an important con

The presentation of authors and works is logically arranged chronologically, by generation and in the sequence of appearance of the respective opuses in time. The work of Milcho Leviev is traced with undeniable piety from 1990 to his last years, in the words of the dissertation author "*one of the most emblematic figures in Bulgarian jazz*", who "*built the foundations, set the directions of development of Bulgarian jazz, and contemporary Bulgarian music in general, and left behind a body of work of enormous scope and significance*". The works of the following authors of fundamental importance for the development of Bulgarian jazz - Vesselin Nikolov, Simeon Shterev, Ognyan Videv - are examined with precision highlighting the peculiarities of the creative style, the specificity of the avant-garde search of Anatoly Vapirov, the unique soulfulness of Yulia Tsenova, the stylistic breadth of Mario Stanchev, the genre diversity of Lyubomir Denev, the extensive performance and creative range of Yildiz Ibrahimova are highlighted, Antony Donchev, Hristo Yotsov, Boyan Vodenicharov, Teodosii Spasov, Vasil Parmakov, Borislav Yassenov and Rumen Toskov, the symphonic orchestral sonority of Angel Zabersky Jr, the individual profiles of the representatives of the generation born in the seventies - Zhivko Petrov, Georgi Kornazov, Plamen Karadonev, Milen Kirov, Milen Kukosharov, Alexander and Konstantin Vladigerov, Konstantin Kostov, Dimitar Bodurov.

In **Chapter Four - *Individual Creative Solutions. Musical Means of Expression and Musical Stylistics*** - first of all, the clarity of the methodology of musical analysis chosen by the dissertation author (consistent presentation of specifics in terms of *melody, meter, harmony, improvisation, musical form and genre, and performance composition*), drawn from the research experience described in the cited literature, but refined in Gergana Kostadinova's own independent work and applied flexibly, in accordance with the particularities of the specific musical work. She has offered several examples, clearly indicative in her view of recent decades, and although she has not articulated the motivation for her choice, it is clear from the overall picture that works with different genre definitions and different types of performers have been sought - Lyubomir Denev's *Divertimento Grosso* (symphony orchestra and big band) and *Rhapsody* (symphony orchestra and piano), *The Spirit of Jazz Piano Concerto* (symphony orchestra) by Hristo Yotsov, *Little Requiem* (piano, trumpet/flugelhorn, bass, drums and string quartet) by Konstantin and Alexander Vladigerov, the chamber jazz pieces *Bass bow*, *I see a bird flying*, *Illusory freedom* by Antoni Donchev. Kostadinova reveals a variety of creative solutions in almost all indicators - structure of form (single-movement, multi-movement, contrast-composition, cyclic), tonal organization (abundance of different chordal supports - the so-called. scales, bitonality, polytonality), intervallic and harmonic structure, metric (polyrhythm, polymetric, equal and unequal dimensions, jazz pulsation, etc.), texture, instrumentation, type of musicianship (combinations of notated score and improvisation), performance techniques, etc., and to each of her observations of a

particular element she correctly offers a corresponding notated example. As a result, she is also able to draw key generalizations about the stylistic characteristics and trends in Bulgarian jazz culture in the defined period.

The analyses of these works are the convincing concretization of the focus of the dissertation - the exploration of the ever-expanding territory of interpenetration between jazz and the so-called classics in contemporary Bulgarian music.

I would like to emphasize in conclusion that the extensively expanded creative panorama, revealing the abundance of artistic phenomena filling our contemporary musical space, proves the relevance of the developed topic and its perspectivity in the dynamics of future creativity in this sphere.

In general, Gergana Kostadinova's work is distinguished by research thoroughness, very good knowledge of both composers' works and contemporary musicological literature. The text is shaped by clear, concise exposition, precise, scientifically sound theoretical terminology, and rich literary language.

The contributions listed in the Abstract truly reflect the merits of the development.

The PhD student has four publications on this topic in specialized scientific journals (listed in the Abstract) and three participations in one national and two international scientific forums, which fully meets the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree.

Considering the undeniable contributory character of the dissertation and my excellent impressions of the qualities of the proposed text, I would like to confidently recommend to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to award Gergana Dimitrova Kostadinova the degree of Doctor of Education and Science.

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