

OPINION

By Prof. Dr Angelina Petrova Petrova, Institute of Art Studies, BAS on the dissertation of Gergana Kostadinova, PhD student at the Music Department

Gergana Kostadinova's dissertation *Between Classical Music and Jazz: Stylistic Interactions and Genre Transformations in Bulgarian Music in the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries* continues in a convincing way the research traditions in the intersection between classical, ethno-music and jazz, present in the publications of Claire Levy, Rosemary Statelova, Ventsislav Dimov and others. The diversity, multivoicedness and unconventionality of the stylistic and genre synthesis of jazz phenomena with the classical tradition and twentieth-century modernism are explored. The active evolution of authors such as Milcho Leviev, Veselin Nikolov, Simeon Shterev, Anatoly Vapirov, Mario Stanchev, Lyubomir Denev, Yildiz Ibrahimova, Antoni Donchev, etc. fits into the rich empirical background on which the dissertation is based.

The complexity of previously undescribed trends of interaction between different styles in jazz, contemporary and classical music are the subject of the dissertation. New authorial solutions and unorthodox development trends in the field of Bulgarian jazz of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are explored with skill and credibility. I particularly like this way of research: it traces the musically immanent and the language, phenomena, and individual discoveries of the authors to reach its conclusions about the multivoicedness of genre and style blends. This scholarly approach is particularly suited to her subject and is followed with precision, creativity, and correctness.

The dissertation is 202 pp. long, including 17 appendices. It has an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, 61 music examples and four appendices. The bibliography comprises 145 titles, of which 101 in Cyrillic, 44 in Latin and 14 music sources. The discography includes 90 titles of works and albums, 4 videos. What is remarkable is the originality of the author's method, which, after exploring the fields of terminology in this complex and "hybrid" field, reveals the most vivid and versatile picture of worldwide and national searches to construct her hypotheses and reach intriguing, vivid and precise conclusions about the complex trends and interactions in the intriguing field of mixing jazz and classical music.

In Chapter One *Stylistic Interactions in the 20th and Early 21st Century Music* the terminological aspect has been developed in detail - the terminological accumulations both in the musicology devoted to the classical tradition and modernism and in the field of jazz and pop music studies for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are traced. The focus on musicology related to stylistic interactions and interpretations in twentieth-century jazz is a contributory moment. The contribution of Gunther Schuller, who introduced the term third movement, is commented on. The interaction of all twentieth-century styles and techniques is explored in detail: dodecaphony and

aleatoric as synthesis/integration and in the field of jazz. G. Kostadinova avoids the temptation to present a schematic analysis of terminology, to "pass" the phenomena through the manifestations of the hybrid, building instead a delicately systematized, detailed terminological apparatus.

In Chapter Two *Jazz Music in Bulgaria. Manifestations of a Fusion between Classical Music and Jazz*, the study traces the historical perspective of the idea of mixing classical tradition and jazz. The historiographical and cultural perspective/research of the problem is fruitful, applied also to the field of jazz development in Bulgaria. In the jazz practices of the 1920s and 1930s, and even in the founding musicological tradition in our country, in Ivan Kamburov's vocabulary, we find ideas and generalizations about the influence of jazz on 20th century music that were first for our culture. Her observations and analyses lead to the influences of foxtrot and shimmy in the music of Pancho Vladigerov. A historical perspective on the subject leads to original conclusions and observation of the blending of stylistic interactions between jazz and classical music. Gergana Kostadinova traces the emergence of polytonality and polymodality in relation to the development of language in jazz and in the explorations of the 1950s and 1960s in this country. The researcher's dispassionate view notes the influence of the Iron Curtain on the "lateness" of jazz styles in this country in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the presence and experimentation of aleatoric/jazz in Ivan Spasov's *Music for Friends* and *Concerto for Jazz Combo and Strings* (1965), *Music for Big Band and Symphony Orchestra* by Milcho Leviev. According to the author, the last piece was written in 1966, but was banned and performed as late as 1980 under the baton of Alexander Vladigerov.

Her observations on the development of Bulgarian original jazz in the 70s-90s are fruitful. The authorial searches in jazz of Veselin Nikolov, Simeon Shterev, Boyan Vodenicharov and Mario Stanchev outlining here the synthesis or mixing of jazz and contemporary compositional techniques based on authorial compositions and projects and with the help of the creation of authorial jazz formations. It highlights the elements of synthesis: polymodality, Eastern Orthodox intonations, twelve-tone and free jazz, the presence of elements of folklore. Through the prism of the problem studied: the synthesis of classical, twentieth-century compositional techniques and jazz, the profiles of several bright figures stand out: composers and performers in jazz such as M. Stanchev, Boyan Vodenicharov, etc. In the historical paths of jazz in our country, the synthesis or interaction with the compositional techniques of the twentieth century, as well as the combination of jazz / ethno / contemporary music in the original jazz projects, is of great importance. Chapter Two constructs the history of late twentieth-century jazz in Bulgaria around the problem of genre blending and reveals the presence of hybrid techniques as a major and representative phenomenon.

The late twentieth and early twenty-first century were characterized by the establishment of trends such as fusion and ethno-jazz, the development of the festival and club scene. The researcher therefore proceeds to explore the interplay between twentieth-century jazz/ethno/compositional techniques in composers who have not

previously been the subject of specialist study. Among them we find the names of Veselin Nikolov, Simeon Shterev, Ognyan Videv, Anatoly Vapirov, Mario Stanchev, Yulia Tsenova, Lyubomir Denev, Yildaz Ibrahimova, Antoni Donchev, Hristo Yotsov, Boyan Vodenicharov, Veselin Koychev, and Theodosii Spasov. For the beginning of the 21st century, the author concludes that "modern jazz music in Bulgaria runs parallel to the world's, contemporary trends do not differ significantly from those worldwide, they only have their specific features" (cited in the Author's abstract, p. 19). In the text of the dissertation, the object of observation and analysis are the achievements of the youngest musicians, who established themselves precisely in the colorful picture of the beginning of the twenty-first century: Dimitar Lolev, Veleslav Stoyanov, Milen Kukosharov, Alexander and Konstantin Vladigerov, Konstantin Kostov, Milen Kirov, Dimitar Karamfilov, Dimitar Bodurov, Miroslav Turiski, Lyubo Tsanev. An almost unexplored subject for our musicology are the jazz festivals of the 1990s and the first decades after 2000: they are numerous, experimental and in this sense complement the historical perspectives of the mixing of jazz and techniques of twentieth-century composition.

The third chapter *Bulgarian musicians of the late 20th - early 21st century. Creative Appearance and Works* reaches one of the most interesting aspects of this dissertation: the construction of individual authorial styles based on mixing classical tradition, contemporary music and jazz. This chapter is also innovative in terms of empirics because the author explores works, concertos, scores, and recordings. The conclusions here rest on the dissertator's large body of innovative research on new material by Milcho Leviev, Simeon Shterev, Anatoly Vapirov, Lyubomir Denev, Antoni Donchev, Hristo Yotsov, Borislav Yasenov, Angel Zabersky Jr, Alexander and Konstantin Vladigerov, Milen Kirov, and Dimitar Bodurov.

Gergana Kostadinova has conducted several interviews with them, which are part of her dissertation. They add valuable insights and touches and represent an original source for the research. The author problematizes a new point - the interaction of techniques from the second half of the twentieth century with jazz, and according to her, "It should also be noted that many of the musicians use compositional techniques and techniques from the music of the twentieth century - dodecaphony, serialism, sonoristics, aleatorics (Milcho Leviev, Veselin Nikolov, Anatoly Vapirov, Lyubomir Denev, Yulia Tsenova, Mario Stanchev, Boyan Vodenicharov, Milen Kirov, etc.). But this tendency should not be accepted as universally valid" (op. cit., p. 21). The author interprets a wide range of interactions: scleys, metre and jazz improvisation techniques in Hristo Yotsov's piano concertos, some works by Antoni Donchev, Alexander and Konstantin Vladigerov. The most diversified and dominant tendency is to mix elements of jazz and elements of Bulgarian folklore. Chapter Three strikes a very good balance between theoretical summary and empirical analysis/observation. Therefore, the idea of the interaction of classical, folklore and jazz stand out in all its richness, brightness, and different colors. Gergana Kostadinova commented on the unconventional performance line-up of Milcho Leviev's *a Journey in Two Worlds: big band, folk choir and two pianos*. Accordingly, the accents are on Bulgarian folk music and jazz in two different parts - *Bulgarian Suite* and *America - Rhapsody in*

Blue. The first part is an interpretation of Bulgarian folk songs and the second - a different take on George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Gergana Kostadinova also builds portraits of less explored jazzmen such as Veselin Nikolov who mixes jazz, church Slavonic intonations and Anatoly Vapirov who intrigues with his aesthetic style of mixing polyphony, dodecaphony, improvisation, sonorities. In fact, the idea of compositional and stylistic syntheses taking place in the jazz scene in which the flow of tradition and the flow of avant-garde-modernist thinking of the twentieth century are concentrated/enriched is articulated by her, avoiding any schematism, imposition of theoretical schemes, etc.

We can see that the author of the dissertation seeks to show the richness of her object of study, its non-standard phenomena aspects. In doing so, she draws an important line in musicology exploring the field of jazz music. In the last chapter of her dissertation, she creates portraits of the stylistic and linguistic explorations of Mario Stanchev, Yildaz Ibrahimova, Antoni Donchev, Hristo Yotsov, Boyan Vodenicharov and Theodosii Spasov, Vasil Parmakov, Borislav Yasenov. Gergana Kostadinova thus became one of the remarkable researchers of the field of instrumental jazz of the 21st century in our country, choosing to focus on the stylistic and genre-linguistic interaction between classical tradition, the 20th century and jazz. In short, she not only states an ambitious intention, to trace and establish this phenomenon over a wide period and from the last decades, but also summarizes essential and fundamental phenomena, analyzing, systematizing, and refining her concepts on a vast amount of hitherto unexplored works. Thus, her research contribution can be defined as fundamental to the phenomenon of the genre and language synthesis of classical, modernism and jazz in Bulgarian music in the last three decades.

In summary, I will take the liberty to highlight some of the contributions of her dissertation. First, she embarked on an exploration of the whole rich empirical material: styles, festivals, analyses of works, performances, etc.; to this she added her in-depth analyses and interpretations on the musical material and the testimonies of the authors themselves through interviews, which are a very substantial document of her subject. In this way, the approach to the synthesis of classical, jazz and twentieth-century language is interpreted with remarkable completeness and versatility. Her study is also very balanced in terms of the juxtaposition of terminology, research "tools" and ideas, and the interpretation of musical sound phenomena. Ultimately, her conclusions about the synthesis of compositional layers and styles rest on a serious layer of empirical research and analysis, which she carries out with all the passion and precision of which she is capable.

One of the important and contributory points is the excellent systematization and balance of personalities, historical and theoretical observations, analyses, and generalizations about the period. Kostadinova rightly notes that the work can serve as a didactic manual for professional readers, students, and pupils in specialized music schools. The work impresses with its precision, with the great potential of the systematized and studied phenomena of the synthesis of classical music and jazz; it is

a phenomenon in the field of musicology that interprets the contemporary Bulgarian jazz scene.

The dissertation *Between Classical Music and Jazz: Stylistic Interactions and Genre Transformations in Bulgarian Music in the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries* is a valuable, innovative, fundamental study. It is the result of the complex presence of Gergana Kostadinova as a performer, pedagogue, musicologist, and theorist. This dissertation is a serious entry and contribution of a young scholar in the field of musicology, which studies jazz and pop music in its relation to the classical tradition and to the trends of the twentieth century. The work is of high informative value, a thorough scholarly and historiographical contribution, and deserves high praise.

I confidently recommend the esteemed scientific jury to award Gergana Kostadinova the degree of *Doctor of Education and Science*.

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