

# OPINION

**By Prof. Dr Borislav Alexandrov Yassenov**

**Academy of Music, Dance and Visual Arts**

**"Prof. Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv**

I am presenting this opinion as a member of the scientific jury in the procedure for the defense of a dissertation entitled: "BETWEEN CLASSICAL MUSIC AND JAZZ: STYLISTIC INTERACTIONS AND GENRE TRANSFORMATIONS IN BULGARIAN MUSIC IN THE LATE 20<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES", for the degree of *Doctor* of Education and Science, in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, Doctoral Program in Musicology and Music Art. The author of the dissertation is Gergana Dimitrova Kostadinova - PhD student at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS - Sofia, with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stefka Venkova-Mosheva.

I was provided with the following materials: curriculum vitae, dissertation, abstract, list of academic publications.

Gergana Kostadinova completed her secondary education at the National School of Music "Lyubomir Pipkov", Sofia, majoring in Piano. She continues her studies at the National Academy of Music "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov", where she broadened her interests - studied piano in the class of Prof. Daniela Andonova as well as sound engineering. In 2012 she graduated with a bachelor's degree in both specialties, and in 2014 she completed her master's degree in sound engineering. Subsequently, Kostadinova directed her search in the field of jazz music and in 2018 graduated with a master's degree in Pop and Jazz Piano at the Academy of Music, Dance and Visual Arts "Prof. Assen Diamandiev", Plovdiv.

In her development Gergana Kostadinova participated in numerous concerts and master classes and summer music academies in Bulgaria and abroad.

Her creative artistic activity is extremely active. From 2012 to 2022 Kostadinova performed in various cities in Bulgaria and abroad. Her sound recording activity is combined with compositional work, creativity that led to the release of three albums of original music - "A Day of a Lifetime" (2020, together with Vesislava Todorova - cello), "Fulfilled Moons" (2021) and "Glows" (2022).

The author of the dissertation participated in the International Conference "Art Studies Readings" (2018, 2019) and the Youth Scientific Conference "Art and Context" (2021) with papers published in the editions of the forums and has a publication in "Bulgarian Musicology" (2021). The scientific publications are four and are directly related to the topic of the dissertation.

Kostadinova's pedagogical activity relates to the National Music School "Lyubomir Pipkov", Sofia, where she works as a teacher of piano.

The author's affinity for classical and jazz art in Bulgarian music and professional interests provoked her to create a voluminous and in-depth study concerning the synthesis between the two genres, as well as the presentation of important personalities shaping the image of Bulgarian musical art in this sphere. Special attention is paid to the creative achievements and musical-aesthetic outlook of the artists mentioned.

The relevance of the dissertation topic is determined by the fact that musicology lacks a thorough and systematic study of the phenomena and approaches in the development of contemporary Bulgarian classical and jazz art from the late twentieth century to the early twenty-first century, which justifies the importance of the dissertation, and also that many of the representatives of the period under study continue with their active creative activity at present, i.e. the topic is open for future research.

The theoretical method related to the chronology of the development of the Bulgarian art, in the considered issues, in historical aspect, analysis, synthesis, generalization, deduction and interview are used in the development. This creates a prerequisite for expanding the information related to the artists in Bulgarian music, the phenomena, and trends in the creative-performing art in Bulgaria, as well as enriching the aesthetic worldview and knowledge of the style. A complex approach is applied.

In literature devoted to music theory there are publications on the subject, but due to the dynamic development of the creative process in our modernity and new achievements, the issues have not yet been covered comprehensively and thoroughly, therefore it can be said that the dissertation represents the first comprehensive academic study of "stylistic interactions and genre transformations in Bulgarian music in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century". The doctoral student examines the trends generated by inter-stylistic collaborations predetermining innovations in musical art, leading to new emotional-aesthetic suggestions, as well as the performers contributing to the development of musical art in this direction - works, albums, recordings and concerts created in the last decades with an emphasis on those with the most outstanding achievements.

All of this will enrich the theoretical and practical skills of young performers and expand the competencies of music educators. The above determines the contribution character of the dissertation.

The object of the research is the original creativity of Bulgarian musicians of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, generated by the synthesis between classical music and jazz.

The aim is to present, systematize and analyze the creative process and achievements in contemporary Bulgarian music culture in the issues under consideration.

The tasks are as follows: tracing the forms of synthesis between the different musical styles, paying attention to the influences of classical music of the twentieth century, as well as the Bulgarian folklore; musical-aesthetic analyses of the works;

systematization of the Bulgarian musicians, performing in this direction, as well as the works created during the period under consideration.

Interviews are conducted with musicians whose artistic pursuits are directly related to the subject under consideration, which deepens the information on their worldview and creative approach.

In the introduction of this comprehensive study, the PhD student presents the object, aim, objectives and states her research hypothesis.

In Chapter One, "Stylistic Interactions in Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Century Music. Problematics and Terminological Aspects", the dissertation discusses the main concepts under development and specifies the terminology. It explores the stylistic interactions in the music of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first composers experimenting in their work with the application of jazz elements, basic to contemporary phenomena. It is noted that early examples were mainly in symphonic and piano music, which assimilated/reinterpreted specific elements of the metro-rhythm in jazz, while by the mid-twentieth century the exchange of musical expressive means was already two-way and more extensive. The PhD thesis argues that the positive influence on the development of creative practice in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries brought about by the collaboration between genres was expressed in several professional aspects, and that over time this process became a natural creative approach.

In Chapter Two, "Jazz Music in Bulgaria. Manifestations of synthesis between classical music and jazz", the evolution of jazz in Bulgaria is chronologically traced, the first attempts of synthesis between classical music and jazz are presented, as well as the development of trends in this direction. It examines characteristic compositions and contemporary approaches to the interaction of the two genres, as well as the practical application of works of this type of art according to the specifics of the musical scene. Special attention is paid to jazz festivals as forums in which this type of music is premiered.

The affinity to folklore as one of the most current trends of jazz music since the 1980s in Bulgaria is mentioned.

Kostadinova states that the period after 1989, in which the creative activity was developed by musicians of several generations, which led to the development of traditions and their combination with new trends, often influenced by current trends in world jazz and contemporary music, is of great importance for the study.

In Chapter Three, "Bulgarian Musicians of the Late 20<sup>th</sup> - Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Creative image and works" a creative portrait of the musicians performing in the area under consideration is made. A first attempt at a chronological presentation of the works in the studied period is realized. The conclusions are the result of a thorough analysis of sheet music, sound recordings and concerts.

The relevance of the dissertation topic "BETWEEN CLASSICAL MUSIC AND JAZZ: STYLISTIC INTERACTIONS AND GENRE TRANSFORMATIONS IN

BULGARIAN MUSIC IN THE LATE 20<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES", is conditioned by the dynamics in the development of contemporary Bulgarian music, which has achieved new emotional-aesthetic parameters thanks to the synthesis between classical and jazz music, the great interest in Bulgarian performing arts and the need to examine, analyze and renew the creative potential, the approaches to interpretation and teaching methodology, as well as their practical application.

The volume of the subject matter covered, and the results achieved show the author's strong interest and professional commitment, as well as her personal outlook and innovative approach to the issues at hand.

In this work a large amount of information is collected, systematized and analyzed in 202 pages, including 17 pages of appendices. It includes an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion. The explanations are substantiated with appropriate notational examples (61 in number), which contribute to creating an even clearer picture of the subject under consideration. 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.

The abstract is prepared as required and gives a clear idea of the content, object, aim, objectives, research tools and reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation.

The contributions of the paper are as follows:

- for the first time the collaboration between classical music and jazz in the Bulgarian musical culture of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are examined in detail. It analyses the creative product as well as the process of cultural interactions characteristic of the period. The problem is covered in its contemporary relevance, by putting forward a theoretical framework, and by an analytical presentation of numerous authors and works, and their specificities in the context of musical life in Bulgaria.
- the semantics of contemporary terms and concepts expressing the interactions between different musical styles is traced.
- chronologically presented are the artists of several generations, as well as their works in the field of the creative daring under consideration; the characteristic features of their style are summarized.
- interviews with Bulgarian musicians L. Denev, A. Donchev, A. Zaberski Jr. Bodurov, in the context of the issues discussed and their opinions on the manifestations of stylistic interactions in music.
- several contemporary Bulgarian works are studied in terms of their stylistic peculiarities. Some of them are analyzed for the first time. Based on the analysis, the specifics of genre, musical form, melody, harmony, rhythm, and performance composition are brought out.
- A huge discography realized in the last decades, directly related to the issues under discussion, is presented and discussed.

- the dissertation could serve as a manual for music schools and academies. The study gives a general picture of the peculiarities and stylistic interactions in Bulgarian music of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, as well as a detailed description of the musicians in question.

The clear expression and scientifically sound analyses in the dissertation make a strong impression. Each problem addressed is theoretically argued and lucidly explained. The vocabulary is rich, abounding with professional terms that reveal the subtext and substance of the work. The study is valuable and contributory.

I am confident that the dissertation will arouse interest in musical circles. For this reason, I recommend that the work be published to make it available to a wider readership.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that Gergana Kostadinova's dissertation "BETWEEN CLASSICAL MUSIC AND JAZZ: STYLISTIC INTERACTIONS AND GENRE TRANSFORMATIONS IN BULGARIAN MUSIC IN THE LATE 20<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES" impressed me with the depth and volume of the subject matter, the analyses and the scientific-theoretical justification, written in a professional and at the same time accessible language, as well as with the quality of the examples, helping to make the research even clearer. It is evident from the work that Gergana Kostadinova is an erudite musician with a rich music-theoretical background and concert practice. I believe that the theoretical work meets the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education and Science, as laid down by the ADASRB. This gives me grounds to propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Gergana Kostadinova the degree of *doctor*.

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Prof. Dr Borislav Yassenov