

## REVIEW

of a dissertation for awarding the educational and academic degree Doctor

*in Musicology and Musical Art,*

*professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art*

on the 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.***

Author: Gergana Dimitrova Kostadinova

Reviewer. Prof. DSc Kristina Petrova Yapova

Gergana Kostadinova's dissertation is dedicated to a topic that fits into a problem area with unceasing relevance for at least a century. This area of musical creativity can be described with three key words: interaction (of genres and styles), hybridity (of expressive means) and breadth (of the communicative spectrum). Versatile and multidirectional, it allows the researcher to find in it new and unexplored fields to develop with carefully considered and adequate approaches. The author chooses one of them and bravely faces the difficulties she faces in entering it. Broadly speaking, it is the field *between* classical music and jazz, but it is more of the new, born out of the influences of one on the other. Difficulty arises also with the need to define the two sides in a way that, on the one hand, gives a clear idea of what the initial content of each is, and, on the other hand, overcomes the resistance caused by the repositioning of the definitions "classical music" and "jazz". And here we find the first contributive qualities of the work, which is undoubtedly one of its *merits*. Starting from the terminological foundation that has been built and continues to be built, and building on a series of names already given to phenomena with a shaped physiognomy and to ongoing processes, including *third movement, crossover, fusion, hybrid music, confluent music, world music*, etc. (Introduction, p. 5), Kostadinova convincingly reveals the reasons behind the conceptual pair in question, classical and jazz, reasons that will be confirmed during the exposition.

The object of the study, consisting of authors and musical samples ('works, albums, recordings and concerts created over the last few decades'), its main aim (the formation of 'a comprehensive and contemporary picture of the phenomena in Bulgarian music of the period'), and the tasks to be addressed ('tracing the forms of interpenetration between different musical styles, including the influences of twentieth-century music and Bulgarian folklore; analyzing the genre transformation; covering the Bulgarian musicians who are active in this field and their periodization; collecting a corpus of musical works and examining them in detail", pp. 6-7) are clearly defined and set up. The methodology developed, pursuing the possibility of

"tracing inter-style interpenetration and illustrating its manifestation in Bulgarian music" (p. 7), encompasses "collecting, researching and analyzing literary sources", working on terminology, analyzing musical samples, compiling a discography, and several interviews (pp. 7-8). The literature review is comprehensive, guided by a critical engagement with authors and titles, and enabling a considered transition to G. Kostadinova's own theses.

The dissertation consists of an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion with four appendices, a bibliography (scientific literature and music sources), a discography and a videography. Comprising 205 pages, it is organized in a logical structure following the principle from general to specific problems. The first chapter, *Stylistic Interactions in 20<sup>th</sup> and Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century Music. Problematics and Terminological Aspects* (pp. 17-49), a historical approach is naturally adopted, presenting the phenomenon in the time frame from its emergence to the present. With a clear awareness of the need to introduce the problems associated with terminology, the author immediately proceeds to clarify basic concepts and terms elaborated to describe the synthesis pursued by the processes of stylistic interactions. Foremost among these is the concept of the 'third movement', which has become established in the literature (pp. 34-39), and special subchapters are devoted to the developments since the time to which it refers (pp. 40-47; 47-49).

I would summarize the contributions in this chapter in four points: 1. The intense attention to each of them and the attendant difficulties in uncovering them are caused by the fact that during the period under consideration the tendency to go "beyond musical styles and to create a new creative field" is very strong, that "the musical space is filled with works in which different styles, genres and traditions meet" (p. 17). 2. Exploration of the two-way interactions that led to the synthesis of musical devices, compositional techniques, and devices (pp. 19-20); 3. Refinement of terminology precisely in the context of the synthesis in question (pp. 24-28); 4. Internal periodization of the time span according to the change in musical characteristics and delineation of shaped currents in the respective sub-periods (pp. 28-31). Of particular interest here are the new trends in jazz that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century: hard bop, bossa nova, fusion, smooth jazz, ethnic jazz. What is specific about them is that they avoid the influence of the musical avant-garde and look for inspiration in traditional music, folklore, new popular styles such as rock, funk, and others" (p. 32).

The author's merits are no less in the second chapter, *Jazz Music in Bulgaria. Manifestations of the Synthesis Between Classical Music and Jazz* (pp. 50-79). The expected survey of the ways in which Bulgarian music reflects world musical processes is carried out in a multifaceted and ambiguous way, leading naturally to the specific and innovative solutions of such outstanding musicians of the 1960s and 1970s as Milcho Leviev, Veselin Nikolov, Mario Stanchev, Boyan Vodenicharov, Lyubomir Denev, and others, and of the formations led by them (pp. 58-62). Due place is also given to the Bulgarian examples of the musical genre from the 1960s to the 1980s, created by Jules Levi, Alexander Vladigerov, and Julia Tsenova (pp. 63-

64). I would particularly highlight here Kostadinova's summaries of the 'new trends in the 1980s' (pp. 64-67) in fusion and ethno-jazz.

Undoubtedly, the subject itself, problematized in terms of creative solutions and innovations, necessitates the moment when a personalistic approach comes forward. It yields its greatest results in the third and fourth chapters, *Bulgarian Musicians of the Late Twentieth - Early Twenty-First Centuries. Creative Appearance and Works* (pp. 80-125) and *Individual Creative Decisions. Musical Means of Expression and Musical Stylistics* (pp. 126-165). I would define these chapters as the musicological center of the work since they necessarily proceed to analysis as a method of research. I should stress at once that it is precisely because of the specificity of the phenomena under consideration that this method is applied in a form different from traditional musical analysis, worked out in adequacy to the music of other, well-defined, epochs. And this is precisely the challenge to the knowledge and professional abilities of Gergana Kostadinova, who must approach each *particular* and each *separate*, starting from itself, to look for words indicating the new, the original in the achievement of a musical artist. And she does an excellent job, drawing on the steps she herself has already taken. With the awareness that what she is about to perform is a (musicological) interpretation of the (musical) interpretation performed by the artists themselves, she entrusts them with her faith and at the same time stands in a position of necessary research detachment. This detachment in the direction of possible objectivity allows her to make her own scientific moves, to reach the researcher's significant conclusions. Comprehensive typification and concretization receive the directions in the musicians' search, among which are the folk or jazz interpretation of classical pieces (p. 83) As for the artistic *personae*, here are names that I will take the liberty of listing without omission precisely because of the author's commitment to the importance of the perspective on individuality: Milcho Leviev, Veselin Nikolov, Simeon Shterev, Ognyan Videv, Anatoly Vapirov, Yulia Tsenova, Mario Stanchev, Lyubomir Denev, Yildaz Ibrahimova, Antoni Donchev, Hristo Yotsov, Boyan Vodenicharov, Theodosii Spasov, Vasil Parmakov, Borislav Yasenov, Rumen Toskov-Rupeto, Angel Zaberski-son, Zhivko Petrov, Georgi Kornazov, Plamen Karadonev, Milen Kirov, Milen Kukosharov, Alexander and Konstantin Vladigerov, Konstantin Kostov and Dimitar Bodurov. The presentation of many of their works testifies to a deep knowledge of their music, of the two-sided phenomenon of classical - jazz, of contemporary musical trends, but which is particularly important, of Kostadinova's personal musician's ear and flair.

In the fourth chapter we come naturally to the work with the most subtle matter - the sound. Here the main problem facing the researcher is objective, which is to say that it comes from the object itself. By its very birth it is stretched between the finished work (opus), subject to written fixation, and the unfinished, open improvisatory flow of live musical action (operatio). The musicologist is required to balance the two sides pulling in opposite directions, and, mastering analytic conceptuality, to capture the *form-formed* and to trace the process of *form-formation* in each successive moment to the possible extent beyond which it is conveyed to auditory perception alone. Only in this way will he be able to present the individual creative solutions set

as a goal in this chapter. The thoughtful selection of the works (*Divertimento Grosso* and *Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra Sofia Nights* by Lyubomir Denev, *Piano Concerto the Spirit of Jazz* by Hristo Yotsov, the musical pieces *Bass bow, I see a Bird Flying, Illusory Freedom* by Antoni Donchev and *Little Requiem* by Konstantin and Alexander Vladigerov) that are analyzed is the first step towards the *main contribution* here. It consists in building an adequate analytical model that would serve future researchers of this kind of music. The notational examples given eloquently illustrate compositional techniques inherent in a musician, such as 'gradation by gradual inclusion of instruments, overlapping of voices' or 'semitone tone in the keyboard part of an interval of increased fourth between left and right hand' (in L. Denev, pp. 129, 131); "Phrygian mode (from D) in the harp part" or "pentatonic in the keyboard part" (in Hristo Yotsov, pp. 146, 147); "tracking of a specific intervals in Antoni Donchev" or "alternation of equal and unequal dimensions" (p. 155, p. 160); "unequal, syncopated and ostinato" (in Konstantin and Alexander Vladigerov, pp. 162-163), etc.

The conclusion of the work has been prepared. Each chapter ends with a statement of the generalizations reached in it. This, on the one hand, requires the author to make another move of concentrating, synthesizing and taking the results to the next level, and on the other hand, it contributes to the communicativeness of the text, to the clarity of the theses she has developed.

The abstract of the dissertation has been written as required, it accurately reflects the content and structural relationships between the chapters of the thesis and manages to focus on its points of contribution.

A fortunate circumstance - not accidental, but closely related to the choice of the topic - is the fact that Gergana Kostadinova combines the activities of a theorist and a practitioner: she is a performing artist, author of an impressive number of works, and has made several audio-recordings. I will not fail to point out the fruitful work of the PhD student with her supervisor Assoc. Prof. Stefka Venkova.

Based on the above, I conclude with the proposal to award the educational and scientific degree of Doctor to Gergana Kostadinova.

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