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***„RHYTHM & BLUES“ I AND II BY RUMEN TSONEV –
CREATIVE PROJECTION OF AVANT-GARDE MUSICAL THEATER
AND POSTMODERN VOCABULARY***

ABSTRACT OF DOCTORAL THESIS

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Prof. D.Sc. Rumen Tsonev (born in Burgas on May 30, 1950 – died on September 26, 2014) is a distinguished composer of theater and film music, a teacher at NATFIZ, and then at NBU. He is the author of the music for over 200 theater performances played on four continents, for feature films and documentaries, as well as works for contemporary musical theater. As a professor, he was invited to give lectures and practical courses at the National Conservatory of Dramatic Art in Paris, the Conservatory of Lyon, the Conservatory of Polyphonic Music in Tours, the Royal College of Music in London, as well as the Swedish Royal Theatre. He leads master classes at the Paris Conservatoire, in London, in New York, Boston, Stockholm, Marseille, Lyon, as well as in Bulgaria. Musical director is the theater in Toulouse.

The encounters in his life with the likes of Brigitte Bardot, Ingmar Bergman, Ella Fitzgerald, Maurice Bejart, Peter Greenaway, Bibi Anderson, Alexander Kalyagin, Meryl Streep, Carlos Santos, Slawomir Mrozek, Fernando Arabal, etc., are amazing, enriching his endless and limitless creative path.

In Bulgaria, he works with no less recognized names in the genre, such as Krikor Azarian, Grisha Ostrovski, Alexander Morfov, Kamen Donev, Ivan Dobchev, Margarita Mladenova, Plamen Markov, Boyko Iliev and many others.

For his outstanding achievements in the art of music on a national and global scale, Prof. Rumen Tsonev is a multiple winner of the "Ikar" and "Asker" awards, the "Golden Feather" for his contribution to Bulgarian culture. He is a laureate of the International Theater Festival in Newcastle, England, the International Festival in Edmonton, Canada and the World Theater Festival in Knoxville, USA. In 2000, in Stockholm, he became the only foreign artist awarded the prestigious "Bergman" prize. In 2010, he received the "Ikar" for overall contribution to the Bulgarian theater, and in December of the same year he became an honorary citizen of Burgas – "the most expensive award for him", as he himself has repeatedly shared.

In 1996, Prof. Rumen Tsonev became the musical director of ATEM /Atelier for Theater and Music/ in Paris – the largest center for contemporary musical theater in Europe. There he has the opportunity to touch first-hand with the vast world of avant-garde musical theater and to experiment with cosmopolitan personalities. The experience gained in France is the basis of his interest in avant-garde musical theater and later on his creative performances in our country. That is why the performances "Rhythm & Blues" Part I and II are considered the first manifestations of avant-garde musical theater in Bulgaria.

Composer Rumen Tsonev stands out with his interest and innovative searches on the theater scene not only in Bulgaria. His thinking and work with the talented Hristo Mutafchiev are the basis of these two performances in which I was invited to participate: „Rhythm & Blues“ part I (premiere 2007) and „Rhythm & Blues“ part II (premiere 2011). The work and professional conversations with Rumen Tsonev are the concrete incentive to try to examine, from the point of view of the performer above all, the performances, the result of the creative invention of the composer, formed by the rich French experience he has.

In 2014, when after several years of encouraging appearances in Rumen Tsonev's two shows, thanks to his inspiring support, a few months before his death, he donated his entire personal archive to me. Working on the subject for me is both a creative provocation and a moral duty to his creative heritage.

The "avant-garde musical theater" (according to Rumen Tsonev's definition), which is the subject of my research, is far from engaging only a limited circle of intellectuals. He has brought not only a new language, new ideas, new points of view, but also a new philosophy for music-theatre art, which with its conventionality overturns the thinking and perception of the world of the performers, the audience and professional critics. This is the reason why it is not always understood and accordingly meaningfully evaluated.

The aim of this dissertation is:

- To try to present the conventionality of the avant-garde musical theater, understanding it as a manifestation of postmodern art, by tracing the history of this phenomenon from the second half of the twentieth century in a European context and more precisely in France, with which Rumén Tsonev is professionally connected, and his "transfer" to the Bulgarian scene.
- To draw attention to the Bulgarian theater scene and the important place of Rumén Tsonev in it, by analyzing the two musical-theatre performances.

The research approaches I use are both theoretical, based on research in the field of contemporary musical theater and specifically avant-garde musical theater, and artistic-interpretive, analyzing the author's stage scores of the two performances, based on my own musical-theater experience from my work in them.

Very important are the conversations with the actors Hristo Mutafchiev, Evgenia Lecheva, Petar Kalchev, Yordanka Ilova and Krasimir Spiridonov, with whom we were able to "rewind the tape", to reconstruct in detail the performances, everything that happened happened on stage.

Particularly important was the task I set myself, **to arrange and describe the archive of Rumén Tsonev**. I hope that the attached initial inventory that I made will be important and useful for its future storage in the NBU or in the State Archives.

The structure of the paper follows the research tasks I set for myself. And **the theoretical basis** are those introduced and examined by Prof. Ph.D. Rumén Tsonev conceptual formulations and relevant phenomena in his dissertation work, defended at the Sorbonne in Paris, on the topic "The Audiovisual Form of Manifestation of Musical Theater (The French Compositional Experience in the 1980s and 1990s)". It is the first study of the experimental musical theater of the

1980s and 1990s, assessed as a work of fundamental importance for the theoretical and practical understanding of contemporary phenomena. In it, the subject of analysis are significant works of French musical theater by Georges Apergis and Richard Dubelsky, with whom Rumen Tsonev was practically connected until the end of his life. Very important is his thesis about the "theatrogenic" nature of music¹.

In the current dissertation, an attempt is made to bring out the creative perspective of the avant-garde musical theater in the Bulgarian practice. This was Rumen Tsonev's hidden optimism. In his creative world, the past and the present were equally present, they build a complex picture in which future innovations are contained.

As a musician who also performs artistic roles, my main task is to look at the performances and reconstruct their scenarios. The second and third chapters are dedicated to this, and once again the theoretical basis is the texts of Prof. Rumen Tsonev and the works he quotes related to the avant-garde musical theater. The task is to track to what extent and how these ideas "come to life" on the stage of the Theater "Off The Channel". I also refer to journalistic sources – materials published in periodicals and internet sites, as they have documentary value and reflect the public reflection of Rumen Tsonev's creative projects.

I will emphasize that until now there is no comprehensive study dedicated to his work, and specifically to his music-stage projects. In this sense, this is the first attempt to consider his two RHYTHM & BLUES shows as "avant-garde musical theater" with the prospect of them having a future stage life.

¹ Tsonev, Rumen. On the "theatrogenic" nature of music – In: *Homo Ludens*, 2003, № 6 – 7, p. 258 – 263.

Chapter One: POSTMODERNISM AND THE CONTEMPORARY AVANT-GARDE MUSICAL THEATER (read by Prof. Rumen Tsonev and some researchers of theater and music in the era of postmodernism) is an overview, with the center being the examination of the contemporary "avant-garde musical theater" in the context of Rumen Tsonev's research. The author's texts indicated in his dissertation work and in other publications are fundamental for the creation and concretization of his creative projects, which is why I allow myself to quote some of them, based on the analyzes of Rumen Tsonev, and with the awareness of the complexity of the matter. to do my own critical reading in their selection in the logic of the exposition.

Some sources examining postmodernism in music and theater in our country are also introduced. I will emphasize that the formulation "avant-garde musical theater" is not unambiguous and its conventionality derives above all from the experimental combination of the formal and aesthetic parameters of the arts, music and theater, which are as diverse as searches and stage realization. The term "contemporary avant-garde musical theater" as a catchall for the music-related theatrical forms of expression and with specific artifacts in the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that I examine. This includes the first significant productions, composers, authors, librettists, the creators of this new stylistic direction. I must make the stipulation that the formulation "contemporary avant-garde musical theater" is not unambiguous and its conventionality derives above all from the experimental combination of the formal and aesthetic parameters of the arts, music and theater, which are as diverse as searches and stage realizations in the 20th century.

This wording can be taken as a synonym for "contemporary experimental musical theater", since "experimental" covers the widest range of pursuits without making associations to one or another historically established genre or stylistic direction. But Prof. Rumen Tsonev defines his creative-staging projects, carried out at MGT "Zad Kanala": "Rhythm & Blues" Part I (premiere 2007) and

"Rhythm & Blues" Part II (premiere 2011), which are the specific object of my analysis as "contemporary avant-garde musical theater" and therefore this term is the leading one in the text.

There is hardly a more contested term in the field of musical and performing arts than "contemporary musical theatre". Moreover, to this day, the lack of a single concept that covers the historical manifestations of the type of stage art related to music, and also of a classification principle that would be able to place each of these manifestations in their proper place, is acutely felt. The term "musical theater" was adopted into the English language – *musical theater*, as in most Slavic languages, it is found in German – *musikalisches* or *musikalisiertes theater*, and is associated with the concepts of the composers Djord Ligeti or Maurizio Kagel, as well as the "total theater" of the 1960s and the "instrumental theater" of the 1970s as forms of contemporary musical theater. In Italian practice, the concept is mainly used *azione scenica*. The introduced reflections on this topic by authors such as Wolfgang Ruf, Maurice Fleuret, Maurizio Kagel, Luciano Berio, Georges Apergis, Michel Rostin, Bernard Sobel, Francois-Bernard Mach, Jean-Yves Bossieur, Michel Decoux, Jiri Foukach, and others. enrich the terminological ambiguity of the experimental forms I am considering.

We must accept that the production of the musical theater really has a dual communicative aesthetic function, i.e. it is able to have an impact once as theater and a second time as music, which Rumen Tsonev emphasizes. Here it is not only about individual aspects, but about the overall stage presentation of the combination of musical and theatrical forms, stylistic concepts and performance skills. And the leading position of the musical element in the performing arts creates the immediate feeling and image of "modern musical theater".

Rumen Tsonev specifically and in detail dwells on Maurizio Kagel as one of the composers who showed in the most serious way the theatrical aspects hidden in every musical or, more generally speaking, sound phenomenon. A

number of his works are the subject of special attention in the work of Rumen Tsonev, his influence on the French musical theater and, in particular, on the professional development of such a bright artist as Georges Apergis is traced. The author's performances of Rumen Tsonev can be seen as a practical exposition of Kagel's definition of instrumental theater as a form of performance that includes to a very large extent gesture and at the same time is in a relationship with music that contains visual components, i.e. everything to be seen and heard is composed.

Musical theater is so often abstract and mystical, difficult to digest and unacceptable that understanding between composer and performer is a necessary condition for the realization of a work. Sometimes the explanations in the scores are not enough and in such a case collaboration with the composer is mandatory. Or, as Martine Viard (French actress, singer, interpreter and inspiration for a number of works in the genre by Berio, Apergis, Kagel, Stockhausen) points out, musical theater is always found in the subtext. Therefore, the preparation and implementation of a performance must be the work of the entire team.

These and other author's opinions introduced in the text outline the most general picture of the attitude towards the priority participation of the most prominent artists in the process of realizing the "avant-garde musical theater" of composers, directors, actors, authors, scenographers, choreographers, etc. All these positions are important for Rumen Tsonev and are related to the ideas, philosophy and realization of his two creative projects. This especially applies to the activity of the experimental groups, which are very important because in them interdisciplinary work is the main key to the functioning of the musical theater of the avant-garde. A shining example in the world of experimental theater is, for example, Bob Wilson, who works as a playwright, choreographer, scenographer, lighting designer, artist, performer, video artist, staging performances all over the world.

Along with dramaturgical problems, speech technique, etc., which I specifically focus on, vocal performance is also important. New singing

techniques, new sonorities are sought, the voice is treated as an instrument, the different vocal historical models are the subject of research by the composers of the musical theater of the avant-garde.

The central theme of this analytical review is the French musical theater with the work of Georges Apergis, Richard Dubelsky, Pierre Barrat, Maurice Bejart and others. Today, anyone who begins to deal with this artistic trend shows the tendency to raise aesthetic questions, rather to pose artistic and even formal ones. And indeed, avant-garde musical theater is a phenomenon with nearly 60 years of existence. It has its own national specificity, with the French current seeking above all a closer symbiosis between theater and music outside the traditional paths of opera. The musical theater of the avant-garde in France (with a date and place of birth in 1969 in Avignon) exhibits few permanent formal characteristics, despite its diversity of styles and aesthetics, which later clearly outline the picture of the spectacles created by Rumen Tsonev in Bulgaria:

- presence of the musicians on stage among the actors;
- selection of actors who are proficient in both theater acting and singing techniques;
- lack of restrictions on the number of participants and the duration, which, however, are quite reduced most of the time;
- special care for the choice of plot, as well as for the quality and originality of the literary language.

Arguably, the main contribution of the musical theater of the avant-garde lies in the special attention it pays to the character of music, itself profoundly innovative. And since one of the key words in the concept is "musical", the text introduces basic characteristics that are also pointed out as inherent to postmodernism in music. In this context, Prof. Elisaveta Valchinova-Chendova, even more than two decades ago, specifically focused on this in her book "The New Bulgarian Music in the Last Decades. Models and interpretations" (2004) and in other publications of the "avant-garde musical theater", pointing out that

this is a still new genre theme in Bulgarian music, introduced with some experiments of Rumen Tsonev, made with students from NATFIZ "Krastyo Sarafov" in the 1990s. Rumen Tsonev's works are listed, which can be defined as "avant-garde musical theater" – "Diversions" (1996), "The Circle" (1996), "Replay" (1997), "Emergency Exit" (1999), as well as and "Teatrophony of Affects" (2001), staged at the "ppIANISSIMO 2001" festival based on the works of the world-famous avant-garde composer Andre Bucurestiliev – "Six Piranese Etudes" (1975), Georges Apergis (the father of the French avant-garde theater) – "Recitations" (1982) and "The Circle" for solo voice by himself (1996)².

Prof. Valchinova-Chendova emphasizes that in the reinterpretation from the point of view of teatrophony of foreign and own works and their introduction into a new dramatic and theatrical plot, the overall impression of a new contemporary work is built – an example of a typical postmodern avant-garde musical language, which is filled with sign-laden eclecticism, including freedom in reading and realizing various familiar and genre supports. It is very important that music is a kind of mediator and in the modern post-avant-garde situation it can provide that sure genre and expressive stability that the author needs to convey his ideas to the listener/viewer. Rumen Tsonev demonstrates **the musicality of the theater**.³ His creative support is the musicality of the tones, recreating the theatricality in the society around us. He shares that "the voice, freed from the traditional affects of which it is the bearer, opens up to the sounds of everyday life and thus gives birth to the theater" (R. Tsonev)⁴.

The performances "Rhythm & Blues" have no analogues in the Bulgarian practice. In the following chapters, the two performances are examined, focusing

² Unfortunately, these are works of which I have no personal impressions, and detailed analyzes devoted to them have not been published.

³ **Statelova, Rosemary**. Breathtaking theater – In: *Musica Viva*, 2001, №5, pp. 8 – 9.

⁴ **Valchinova-Chendova, Elisaveta**. Interview with Rumen Tsonev. IV International Festival of Contemporary Piano Music *ppIANISSIMO 2001*. –In: *Musica Viva*, 2001, № 4, pp. 1, 6 – 7.

on the specific approaches to theatrical action in music, based on the original treatment of the human voice, which are indicative and directly reflect the experience, in-depth knowledge and long-term creative activity of Rumen Tsonev as a direct participant in the French musical theater of the avant-garde and as its researcher.

Chapter Two THE AVANT-GARDE MUSICAL THEATER AND THE PERFORMANCES. The concept of "avant-garde musical theater" covers a wide range of searches without making associations to one or another historically established genre or stylistic direction. The possibilities of this in practice, the boundless form and the freedom in the interpretation of the concept inspire Rumen Tsonev and predetermine his creative path and the considered author's projects.

The amalgam of styles, genres and types of musical theater that make up Rumen Tsonev's two author's performances was creatively thought out before their realization on the stage, these disparate elements are structured through musical codes (as defined by Georges Apergis). They include all that Apergis defined earlier as the contemporary musical (or experimental) theater of the avant-garde. And more, they are a mirror of his entire life creative experience, of his spiritual aspirations, reflecting all his personal ideas with which he wanted to provoke society, to feel, to think. Here are some of the commonalities between the two shows: основният герой е музиката;

- past, present and future time in a historical musical context are presented in structural connections on the stage;

- individual parts of songs are constructed with the idea of becoming more and more fragmentary, which is his author's concept;

- they begin with a treatment of a classical piece and end with an a cappella treatment of an emblematic piece from Bulgarian folklore, which Rumen Tsonev always conducts;

- the main cast of the LCT "Off The Channel" plays in both shows;

- all the activities of the singer-artists and musician-artists, without having a dramatic role, reveal the potential dramaturgical possibilities in the stage realization of the musical play;

- the high artistic values in art are affirmed;

- the emotional reaction of the audience is sought, which at the end of the performance becomes part of the theater space.

The overall stage presentation of "Rhythm & Blues" is the combination of musical and theatrical forms, stylistic concepts and performance skills. Dynamic processes take place in the performances under consideration, which make conditional the boundaries of certain types of genres. The tendency for the mutual interweaving of the different arts is manifested in a very strong form in both parts and is based on the principle of interrelationships. The contact with the connecting expressive systems of other arts is multi-layered (which is evident from the analysis of each song).

All these interrelationships the composer bases on the music, even the entire dramaturgy is subordinated to it. It bets on accessible and familiar music for the mass listener and viewer, but presented professionally and artistically in an original way: for example, with singing of 8-10 voices by the artists or with instrumental vocalization that recreates an orchestral sound.

Putting on a musical performance without drama in a dramatic theater is a challenge to the audience and to critics – there is no typical plot/narrative here, the individual parts are not united by a story, but by a theme that keeps the composition from disintegration and illogicality. The idea is to unite in an original way a maximum number of completely different styles of music, which are mixed to such an extent that they already sound similar. Although reminiscent of "comedia dell'arte" with the many improvisations that are the actors' favorite numbers, the show is different. At its core are well-thought-out etudes that are sung rather than acted by the people on stage through movement. "Rhythm &

Blues" is not made up of elementary sketches, although the humor is really many and varied – for example, there are jokes about music lovers who are familiar with the art of opera (it is assumed that people in the audience have at least seen the opera "La Traviata") or are seriously interested in music and know iconic names of composers and titles in each style. And most importantly, the performance is not a show (although there were, are and will be similar opinions of skeptics to such new experimental forms in art). It has original arrangements and transitions between songs, reworkings, intertwining folklore and "R&B" style (Rumen Tsonev is absolutely captivated by Bulgarian folklore and Church Slavonic music, which is felt in his arrangements), and, of course, presented at a high artistic level in the performances of the actors and singers themselves.

The large volume and rich content of Rhythm & Blues music is not an easy task to analyze from a musical point of view. There are many numbers, combining dozens of fragments – songs and ensembles in several blocks, and in the middle of the performance a short pre-recorded film with the participation of the actors is projected. Finally, the trademark of the Rhythm & Blues shows are the encores where the audience erupts in applause as the actors sing on stage. The focus of this analysis is "avant-garde musical theater" as a genre that opens up opportunities for dialogue with already existing forms of contemporary musical theater, but also has its own characteristics.

As highlighted, the composer Maurizio Kagel coined the term "instrumental theater" and offered the "theatrical participation of the instrumentalist" that is present in Rhythm & Blues, with the role of the "instrumentalist" entrusted to an actor who, with his violin, participates in almost every musical number and skit.

According to Rumen Tsonev, when an author works for the theater, he must know everything that will happen on stage. The gestures that all the artists make, their movement, etc., this is another text, not only musical. In order for the composer to create his score, in this case he must know the singing capabilities of

each of the actors – range, manner of singing, and thus determine their most accurate position and vocal part so that they stand out with their qualities .

In order for performers, musicians and theater performers to reach a common result, it is mandatory to rehearse together. This also requires a special artistic discipline. And since it is also a musical performance, additional singing work with the artists is required. For this purpose, Rumen Tsonev works extra with them, and when there is a performance, he calls them earlier to sing them and get the necessary singing tone. Because, as Maurizio Kagel writes about avant-garde musical theater, “here nothing is likened, described, and hardly told. An attempt is made to encourage the individuality of the actor-musicians in order to activate the individuality of the perceiver; form and content, participation and presentation are identical”⁵.

The performance "Rhythm & Blues" retains the character of a phenomenon of a special kind with its own internal mechanisms, the composer noting that he cannot give his score to, for example, the director and stop there. Moreover, "hyper-specialists" are needed to work together, and this is realized in "Rhythm & Blues" – the author is also a composer, a director, and a playwright.

In connection with the peculiar plot, which is not a narrative, Rumen Tsonev steps on the ideas of the work of Luigi Nono about the non-linear concept, implying the fragmentary nature of the plot, divided into separate isolated moments. In general, the greater the departure from the traditional structure – exposition-development-conclusion, the more the story itself, in order to be well understood, requires the active intellectual participation of the audience itself. The new approach to spoken word makes his task easier, as this new genre gives rise to new ideas, a new logic – the maxim of imagination, madness and action. For the composer Rumen Tsonev, the theater is above all image, song and dance.

⁵ Tsonev, Rumen. "The Audiovisual Manifestation of Musical Theater (The French Compositional Experience in the 1980s and 1990s)", 1999. Manuscript, p. 55.

At the same time, in "Rhythm & Blues" there is also a closeness to the concept of Luciano Berio – the whole performance is built from music, from which all the movements, dances and texts under the dramaturgy of the music originate.

Other parallels can be pointed out, proving the dialogical creative attitudes and ideas of Rumen Tsonev with bright new phenomena of the 20th century. For him, musical theater is rather a fusion of the elements (image, text, music and dance), from which all drama and depth in the performance originate. The very construction of the proposed concept means that the content included in it is organically related to the theatrical production, and therefore the final product is neither the score nor its performance, but the audiovisual form of manifestation of the product of the "avant-garde musical theater" in "Rhythm & Blues". Bringing theoretical arguments from the great authors at the dawn of the "avant-garde musical theater", it is clearly seen how Rumen Tsonev borrows from their experience and way of thinking, creating his own new, unquestionably avant-garde for his time, original solutions for the innovative mixed artistic techniques between the theater and the music. Experimenting with these skills, which only the great masters of the genre can, they inevitably also bring fruitful results that allow for a wide field of research that is contained in "Rhythm & Blues".

What happens in Rumen Tsonev's performances is the level of interpenetration – dramatizing the music and analyzing the drama through the music, treating the two functions of the mime-stage representation.

The production of "avant-garde musical theater" is really twofold, i.e. able to act one time as theater and another time as music. This is not only about individual aspects, but about the integrity of the show. If, at its core, musical theater must be understood first of all as a performance, then this does not exclude the possibility under certain circumstances, i.e. in accordance with the actual existing specific important topics in society, the production of the musical theater to fulfill tasks and as music in the whole musical communicative process. All the

actors-singers and instrumentalists in "Rhythm & Blues" create visible musical pictures, which is the composer's idea.

Rumen Tsonev is deeply moved and searches for the truest and most accurate approach that is oriented towards the voice – for him, it is the cleanest, most mysterious and perhaps the most versatile instrument at our disposal. The vocal phenomenon is already a performance phenomenon in itself. From now on, the voice can be used either to convey a special message, i.e. as a 'mediator', or as a sensuous element in which meaning does not necessarily come first. It is no coincidence that the composer Ahmed Essyad (an author respected by Rumen Tsonev) claims that he is primarily interested in the "theatricality of the voice".

Before the composer and the actors-musicians he chose, the question is to try a new way of music-theatrical creativity, where the organizer of the event is the music, these different events are not only a priority of the sound, but also of the gesture, the text and the plastic, etc. The surrounding musical environment also fits into the performance with the specific content it carries, at the same time it is susceptible to transformations and even "re-intonation" of the meaning.

For example, in the first show with the a cappella performance of the hybrid version of Rumen Tsonev's arrangement of the jazz standard "A Nightingale Sang in Berkley Square" by the vocal group "Manhattan Transfer" with the Bulgarian folk song "Kalimanku Denku", the four actors recreate an atmosphere of musical intimacy.

In the "Films" block, he breaks down life's reality by using isolated sounds, gestures, actions, taken out of their context to gain another meaning. Then he adapts them, develops them, using them as a main theme, leitmotif, main rhythm, etc., to achieve an "organized sound" (according to Varese).

In this sense, the composer is not only the "magician organizer" figuratively speaking, but also the demiurge of this reverie of reality, and as such he carries out the complex organization of noises and the sequence of these interwoven sonic "anecdotal themes" (a term used by Georges Apergis). , and the sounds and

gestures themselves, combined in this way, in turn create the drama of the performance.

Experimenting, Rumen Tsonev, for his part, is also looking for new ways to connect music with other arts – theater in the form of video recording and even plastic arts. Thus, the "Films" block in question, which is projected in the middle of the performance, is fragmented but united by famous film tunes, with the actors singing and acting out short theater sketches from the silent film era, i.e. from Charlie Chaplin to the 1990s. The composer, sufficiently experienced in the techniques and ways of writing in different styles, creates these images under the impression of diverse, markedly everyday aspects of reality. As a result, he and the actors have to make a sort of "snapshot" of the musical image created during the short scene in question from actual reality, especially since the instrumental and vocal line-up, as well as the stage space, are too limited. The result, entitled "Movies", are scenes similar to the sketches recorded by the actors themselves, but on stage they are new and differently loaded with content. The number is skillfully "assembled" and accessible to the audience, with each of the songs sung in the original language. Musical collages of masterpieces in world film classics perfectly symbolize the "fragmentation" of our age.

The vocal interpretation of the singing actors is present in all genres of music, starting with the folklore of a number of countries, passing through jazz, musicals, R&B, classical works, opera, tango, instrumental performances and all this is combined with choreography.

The innovation and authorship of Rumen Tsonev consists in the fact that he interweaves, reworks totally different and opposite genres in one song, so that they sound similar. The various hybrid forms he makes are truly ingenious and shocking – for example, in the first performance, the arrangement of the Bulgarian folk song "Kalimanku Denku", which transitions into the Manhattan Transfer jazz standard "A Nightingale Sang In Barkley Square". This is the climax of the performance, which is performed by a soloist who sings the canto of "Kalimanku

Denku", and behind him, three other actors are positioned on the stage, who perform the harmony of the song a cappella. They start together with the jazz version of "Nightingale in Barkley Square", then the harmony overflows and suddenly, against the background of the jazz chords, the beautiful and sensual melody of the Strandzhan folk song "Kalimanku Denku" sounds, and in the finale they return again to the jazz a cappella arrangement, which ends with one final chant of the phrase "Kalimanku Denku" echoing in the silence of the salon. "I sewed the belt to the button" – these are the words of Rumén Tsonev, which illustrate his idea – how he managed to "sewn" an entire musical performance to one song.

In the third and fourth chapters, the two performances are examined in detail, and their scenarios are also reconstructed.

The first performance is 100 minutes with 82 musical fragments from different works. The actors are all the time on stage, and this is extremely stressful, as they do not stop for a second, they have no time to relax, and the short and individual exits behind the scenes are only for super-fast changes.

The second performance is more extended, over 120 minutes initially. Subsequently, some numbers are dropped to be 120 minutes long. It is a continuation of the first one. It was realized together with the talented actors from the first part, but this time the line-up was also renewed with students of Prof. Rumén Tsonev from the Department of Music and Department of Theater of the New Bulgarian University⁶. The response in the media space was great, the show was evaluated as a phenomenon in the theatrical and cultural life of Bulgaria.

⁶ Actors Hristo Mutafchiev, Filip Avramov, Stoyan Mladenov, Petar Kalchev, Stella Gancheva, Albena Mihova, Yordanka Ilova, Simeon Bonchev, Jeni Alexandrova and three new additions take part in the attractive performance - Krasimir Spiridonov on the piano, Hristina Pipova as part of the singing actors and Milena Spiridonova - violin.

A part of the printed text of the script of the first performance is preserved in the composer's archive. Because it lacks many details, as well as entire numbers from the act, its author's text is italicized to distinguish it from my additions made after repeated conversations with the artists, as well as based on manuscripts preserved in his personal archive. -full and fragmentary notes and notes, which are also marked in italics.

Here is the place to emphasize that there are no notated harmonic relationships between individual fragments of songs, as they are created together with the composer when recording in the studio. This is also part of the improvisational moment in the style of "avant-garde musical theater".

Unlike the first, a more detailed script has been preserved for the second performance, also cited in italics, which has also been clarified and supplemented.

The Conclusion summarizes the results of the set research tasks and indicates the contribution moments of the work, formulated in seven guidelines:

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS

1. For the first time, the work of the composer Rumen Tsonev is the subject of independent research.

2. The composer's relationship with the French avant-garde musical theater and its reflection on his creative projects are analyzed.

3. A complete reconstruction of the scenarios of "Rhythm & Blues" was made, adding based on individual notes of Rumen Tsonev, conversations with the actors and my notes the missing moments in the preserved texts of the composer. This is a perspective for the future creative life of the performances.

4. An attempt was made to analyze the musical material of the two performances as a manifestation of the "theatrogenic" nature of the music.

5. The public response to the performances was monitored.

6. The text also reflects my overall observations from our joint work with Rumen Tsonev.

7. A primary inventory of the personal archive of the composer was made (Appendix II).

PUBLICATIONS
ON THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

1. CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL MUSICAL THEATER – In: X Young Scientific Music and Dance Forum: Conference with international participation, 2016. Booklet with summary and CD with the reports. Sofia: NBU, 2016. 12 p.

2. "RHYTHM & BLUES" I BY RUMEN TSONEV – AUTHOR'S PROJECT AND REALIZATION. – In: XI " Young Scientific Music and Dance Forum: Conference with international participation, 2017. Booklet with summary and CD with the reports. Sofia: NBU, 2017. 8 p.