

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Angelina Petrova Petrova,
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on the dissertation of
Stefan Todorov Dragostinov

professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art,

PhD student at New Bulgarian University,

on the subject:

POLYTEMPOS - TIME AND SPACES

for the award of the Educational and Academic Degree of Doctor

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Simo Lazarov

1. Biographical reference - Stefan Todorov Dragostinov's European and world presence on the new music scene

The least that can be said about Stefan Dragastinov is that he is a composer recognizable in the context of the global development of new music in the last decades of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, both in Europe and America, and respectively in our country. He has achieved worldwide renown, performed at the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Warsaw Autumn Festival, the Moscow Autumn Festival, the Bergamo-Brescia Festival, the Gaudeamus Music Festival, the Bratislava Biennial, the New Year Music Festival - Sofia, the Salon of Arts - NDK, the March Music Days - Ruse, the Varna Summer, the Sofia Music Weeks... Performers of his works are the most famous ensembles for new music such as Ensemble Enter Contemporain - France, RAI Symphony Orchestra - Milan, Choir and Orchestra of the Dutch Radio, Sofia Opera, Sofia Philharmonic. He rose on the horizons of New Music forums with his very first works, receiving even before he turned 30. First prizes at prestigious international composition competitions: "Gaudeamus in the Netherlands for the cantata The Fair (1978), First Prize at the Karlheinz Stockhausen Competition in Italy for the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1980), Grand Prix of the Fondation France - Arthur

Honegger for the cantata *Polytempi 3* (1982), Simon Bolivar - Venezuela for the *Symphonie-Monument* (1984), Fernando Pessoa - Portugal for the *Ode to the Sea* (1986).

Stefan Dragostinov was invited to work in Kürten by Karlheinz Stockhausen himself, and has resided in Paris and Warsaw performing composition projects. "Symphony No. 3, dedicated to peace, was commissioned by Rotary International, and at its glittering 1985 premiere received congratulations from Heads of State around the world, including Ronald Reagan, Francois Mitterrand.

From the very incomplete description so far, we understand that from his very first steps, Stefan Dragostinov discovered his striking originality, searching for the "intersection" of European traditions as well as the idea of nature and folklore, creating an original, unknown compositional concert, a recognizable sound image, drawing a path/presence in his time - the last three decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the third millennium.

Back in the confinement of totalitarianism, he contacted and worked with Stockhausen and other coryphaeuses of composition of the last and this century. Throughout, he was unconventional, rebellious, unruly - and above all - remained in European thought as a composer associated with a new kind of sound, influenced by folklore and who created a compositional method for the musical times.

Of course, as conductor of "Philip Kutev", "Dragestin-Fol" S. Dragostinov has marked no less brilliant series of world successes. His contribution to the performance and creation of arrangements and original songs based on folklore has been recognized in Berlin, Moscow and many world capitals, his writing based on folklore is unique, as is his work with the bagpipes of the human voice. And now, in 2023, in his study "*Polytempi - Times and Spaces*" he carries out the titanic work of theoretical generalization and creation of a theory of the method of controlled polytempi, which he has applied in his work since 1978 .

His dissertation, or actually the book "*Polytempos - Times and Spaces*" is a unique attempt of the composer to formulate the philosophical, aesthetic and music-theoretical foundations of his interpretation of the method of controlled polytempi as a phenomenon and evolution in the late twentieth and twenty-first century. It is also the first work by a Bulgarian composer to establish a philosophical, music-theoretical and composition-technical theoretical conception of musical time. In doing so, he not only ranks alongside twentieth-century "greats" who created a theory of composition distinctly interested in musical time, such as Hindemith,

Messiaen, Boulez, and Stockhausen, but also elevates his brilliant career as a composer by adding an original postmodern philosophy of musical time and a composition-theoretical apparatus/approach that generalizes his compositional discoveries.

Contents of the dissertation

POLYTEMPS - TIME AND SPACES (with scientific supervisor Prof. Simo Lazarov). The thesis has been discussed and directed for defence by the Department of Music of the NBU. The total volume of the work is 216 pages. Bibliography (20 sources in Cyrillic; 11 in Latin), and 2 Appendices.)

Stefan Dragostinov's work is an expression of his sound and compositional philosophy - a philosophy of musical time and space, a complete view, vivid, and focused by himself. This view is central to his global and European presence as a recognisable, vivid composer of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the European and world space of new music. The work summarizes Stefan Dragostinov's musical philosophical, compositional and theoretical vision of musical time, and the real reason he wrote this work is that, like the most prominent composer figures who have created a philosophy, theory and compositional technique related to musical time - such as Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Pierre Boulez before him, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Olivier Messiaen even before him - he follows, builds, reflects and immerses himself in all possible ideas/aspects of a vision of musical time as a subject of composition that stands on the border between the avant-garde and postmodernism.

If Bernd Alois Zimmermann theorizes on the vision of musical time as "a sphere/circle of musical time in which past/present and future dissolve" - i.e. his Aristotelian philosophical and musical model and vision are the limit of the serial and a transition to the post-avant-garde, while S. Dragostinov starts from the postmodern: for him, the ultimate acceleration/shortening of time, captured in the philosophical theory of O. Marquardt, is now metamorphosed into musical-philosophical reading of the plural tense. It is a theory that shows distemporality as a phenomenon of postmodern thinking following accelerations. Thus, Stefan Dragostinov defines the compositional subject "time" in a new way. With this, he became one of the few Bulgarian composers who created and dressed in a philosophical, theoretical and sound vision the philosophy and theory of composition, of his own view. And this is a border that until now, for a number of reasons of the historical development of the composition, for example after 1945, has not been crossed... In addition, Stefan Dragostinov's

theory of musical time was written after ten years of thinking/practices and dozens of works - with which it was born with Messiaen's work "Treatise on Rhythm, Color and Ornithology", which the great French author wrote at the end of his career as a kind of summary of his ideas about musical time.

Dragostinov's dissertation is in the context of the philosophy and theory of composition: and it examines musical polytemporality in several aspects. They are established by composers writing about musical time such as Messiaen, perhaps Ives and Cage, linking composition, nature and silence in the concept of musical time. Second, but not least, is the compositional techne aspect of "controlled polytempia" - ie. the terminological apparatus of controlled polytempium, including proportions, coincidence, monotempium in polytempium. Themes initiated by Messiaen/Bartók and interpreted in terms of musical time are "Music and Nature", "Rhythm and Nature"; musical tradition - understood as temporal "affects" of past/present/future. Dragostinov defines all these "matters" according to his vision of musical philosophy and compositional theory dedicated to polytempo.

Polytempia is brought out as a postmodern phenomenon of thinking/philosophy of time: in it we find both the focus of the "ultimate haste" and the breakdown of time into "moments", defined, as already mentioned, by the German philosopher Odo Marquardt, and the silence/silences and the accidents of the visionary Cage, and the idea of hyper-precision, techne, called to displace the canon of serialism. At the same time, Dragostinov managed to "submerge" his entire manuscript in the idea/thread of connection or opposition to Bulgarian tradition and folklore, which carries the substance of folklore, of noises, silences and times. Dragostinov draws a parallel between his theory of musical multitemporality or polytemporality and the postmodern philosophical ideas of Deleuze and Guattari. As the basis of post-avant-garde and synthetic thinking, he establishes the rhizome and its repetitions. Guided by his individual and strictly differentiated from the known theories and philosophies about time in musical composition, he pursues his own philosophical, aesthetic and technical formula of musical multi-time in the composition of the 20th and 21st centuries. By the way, he knows extremely well the views on musical time of Bartok, Messiaen, Boulez, Stockhausen, quotes them freely, differs in his interpretation from them.

In "POLYTEMPOS - TIME AND SPACES" S. Dragostinov follows the tradition of composers such as Messiaen and/or Stockhausen. It starts from the innovative-philosophical concept of musical time. In the first chapter, he begins with an account of the nature/musical

composition relationship. In agreement with Olivier Messiaen and his reasoning in "Treatise on Rhythm, Color and Ornithology", Stefan Dragostinov initially discovered polytempia in "*parallel running processes of different speeds in the movement of celestial bodies in time and space*" (p. 33).

Messiaen relies on ancient Greek theories, and S. Dragostinov - on the structure of the cosmos and makes sense of it as a source of his idea of multi-time, bound to nature. The relationship "nature - polytempia" is also studied through the eyes of folklore unity / poetization of every sound, of every "moment of silence", relative to "sound, speech, whisper, noise". Dragostinov's philosophical-compositional view of polytempia in the relationship of nature / cosmos and music, silence and sound, close to Cage's ideas and differing from serialists, is associated with the inherent-modernist identification of spirit-nature-existence, i.e. the union of spirit with nature. According to Salvatore Chiarino, quoted by M. Kostakova: "*I listen to nature with the ears of an insect or a giant and try to recreate what the wind, clouds and stones sound like.*"

Stefan Dragostinov writes as his first chapter: "*Movement – the main process in space. Permanent multiplicity of motion in space. Polytempia*". The difference between him and the postmodern Salvatore Schiarino, Adriana Hölski and others is in the derivation of the phenomenon of polytempia and in connection with the reading of the original Bulgarian Folsklor, in which the ratio of nature / silence / sound have their inseparability and overflow one-in-another.

Chapter Two, "The Origins of Polytempic Processes in Music. Development of polyphonic genres in the Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, Classicism and Romanticism. The new polyphonic forms in music – the natural means of the emergence of polytempia" is subordinated to the postmodern idea, according to which it is necessary in today's time layers of composition to integrate past historical epochs into the history of music. Stefan Dragostinov analyzes the different time phenomena of tradition, as well as the predecessors of polytempa. This is an approach bent by the postmodern, which, however, interprets traditional models in the direction of rupture, the decay of time through its acceleration and dissociation.

Chapter Three "*The diversity of stylistic currents in twentieth-century music. New artistic and technological techniques in the realization of polyphonic, polyrhythmic and polytemporal Constructions*". The main "forerunners" of polytempia are the theories and practical

achievements of polymetry and polyrhythmy in Hindemith and Bartok. Here, somehow quite naturally, the theory of composers Dragostinov contains the idea of conflict with the dictates of metric accents, of the polyrhythmic and polymetric asymmetry that fills the polyphonic tradition of the twentieth century. The main lines that lead to the formula of multitemporal or polytempia are the polyphonic tradition of the European polyphonic, as early as the 16th century - and folklore asymmetry and asymmetry. They give themselves a "meeting" in the approach to the compositional concept and the theory of polytempia of Stefan Dragostinov.

Chapter Four "**Development of Polytempic Processes in Twentieth Century Music**", Stefan Dragostinov introduces as a new term "polytemporism" and traces the emergence of this kind of idea/interpretation of musical time in American visionaries-pioneers such as Charles Ives and Noncarrow and Harry Grant, then analyzes the appearance of serials types of polytempia in Luigi Nono, Luciano Berio and Karlheinz Stockhausen. He then commented on polytempia as a phenomenon in Steve Reich's "minimame music". and in Furniehou's complexism. Finally, the ideas/concepts for polytempia of the Bulgarian authors Bozhidar Spasov and Iliya Kozhuharov, as well as younger authors such as Kyle Gan, Peter Toegersen and Mihail Puchkov are explored. Impressive is the analysis of Stefan Dragostinov on a turning point for the twentieth century: "Groups" by Stockhausen. This is one of the few, if not the only, analysis that goes into the "inner fabric" and mentality of Stockhausen's work, written by a Bulgarian author. In this sense, S. Dragostinov has boldly violated the tabooization and superficial interpretation of the compositional phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century - he analyzes them adequately, thoroughly - this changes the "horizons of vision", breaks the taboo of theoretical and aesthetic "untouchability" of postmodern composition.

Chapters Five and Six, respectively: "**Controlled polytempia. Historical prerequisites for the development of new technological-creative directions. The composer Iliya Kozhuharov and the apparatus created by him PHOTOPOLYMETRONOME, providing permanent submission of polytempo information to performers (or conductors) musicating at different tempos**" and "Creation of a new, improved technological design of the Photopolymetronome **equipment**" **present the first of its kind documentary study of the theory of controlled polytempia, as well as the relevant equipment created in Bulgaria in the late 1970s.** The author of the equipment is I. Kozhuharov. S. Dragostinov wrote this chapter with the self-esteem of a European thinking composer, he studied documentarily the attempt to create an original theory of "controlled

polytempa" of I. Kozhuharov. The objective picture and document for the creation of this compositional phenomenon / idea in the twentieth century by several like-minded composers is an unprecedented fact for our otherwise totalitarian publicity and "self-sufficiency". Today, however, it is in S. Dragostinov's dissertation that the method of controlled polytempia is entirely recreated and completely clearly recreated and even, beaten say, turning point for the twentieth century.

Chapter seven: "*Different time parameters of a polytempic period, according to the speed of movement of polytempic structures*"; eight: "*Subordination of two polytempic periods occurring in different time parameters*" and Chapter Nine: "Technological implementation of monotempic structures in polytempo space" are the real part: they are devoted to the compositional theory related to the development of a huge theoretical apparatus for controlled polytempia, supported by analyses of examples from Stefan Dragostinov's own work. For the first time, ***a complete compositional theory of controlled polytempia was formulated, and its originality and non-standardity was defined systematically as a compositional*** method, which is different from those in serialism, from the temporal construction of Ligeti. Stefan Dragostinov has the self-confidence, courage, and clarity of a thinker and theorist to show that in fact this kind of controlled polytempia, about which he wrote is an untranslatable, original compositional method related to the theory of musical time, in which specific compositional concepts and mechanisms are defined. In Chapter Eight he interprets the basic and important method of composing, defined by him as "**Subordination of two polytempic periods occurring in different time parameters**", i.e. the trace elements of "coincidence" ("semaphore") and "divergence" (Polytempic Fan)) are discussed, proportional modulations in polytempic ratios are defined. It is no coincidence that with his opuses: Polytempi 3, Polytempi 4, concerto for piano and orchestra, Polytempi 5 etc., the composer won the most authoritative awards in composition. They are marked by innovation, by the sound synthesis of symmetry / asymmetry, folklore and serial. This is a very special entry into the temporal and compositional construction of the composition in the 1970s and 1980s, which brings a discovery about the Western European compositional situation.

Many authors of complexism later, such as Furnihoe and others, created complex polymetric and polytempo constructions, but such a precise and consistently derived compositional method/technique for polytempia, combined with the primordial asymmetries inspired by Bulgarian folklore, is not found in other authors. Dragostinov defined the

principles and polytempe situations, the possible theoretical justification of the method, which distinguishes it in the European-postmodern space of composition.

Controlled polytempia also explores paradoxes in the proportions of musical time. Therefore, the "extreme" states of the fabric are associated with the paradox of "monotempia in polytempa". The paradoxical effect of polytempia is analyzed in Chapter 9, which says: "*the extensive possibilities for technological realization of monotempo structures built on the basis of Controlled Polytempia reveal new, incomprehensible creative spaces for the contemporary composer*" (p. This is paragraph 9.1. **"Complementary Techniques for the Realization of Monotemporal Structures by Transformation of Polytemporal Structures,"** which explores asymmetric polytempo mechanisms such as 3:4,3:5, 3:7; then 4:5,4:7,4:9, 5:7,5:9, and 6:7.

The asymmetry that mixes the interpretation of equilateral/non-equal and proportional divisions of the note values is the source of the method of controlled polytempia. Stefan Dragostinov has turned Bulgarian and Balkan asymmetry into a compositional method, placed in asymmetric ratios, revealed the specifics of the "temporal asymmetries" changing horizontally and vertically. I note that while in some of the cited composers of the twentieth century, using polytempia as the serial authors, or György Ligety, most often polytempe episodes are part of the work, here polytempia covers the entire score. In Chapter 10, the performing artist, conductor Dragostinov interprets the performing difficulties in controlled poitempia and it is titled: **"Controlled polytempia and emerging psychological obstacles for conductors and performers"**.

The most radical sounds the general conclusions in the last, eleventh chapter. Stefan Dragostinov's disobedience and absolutely authentic unconventional thinking leads him to interpret / derive the controlled polytempia as a current and leading in the future compositional method and also a theoretical concert of the composition, already from the 21st century. Its authentic terminology, including terms such as Polytempism, is summarized here; Monotempism (Monotempism); Graphic symbol Semaphore; Light pace indicator (LPI) Polytempic period; Head common vertical; Second common vertical (Second common vertical); Central common vertical (Central common vertical); Fourth common vertical (Fourth common vertical); Polytempic fan; Realization of Monotempism through Polytempism; Polytempic Change-button. Systematics and working with these terms is part of the vision that controlled polytempia is not just a historical experience of the twentieth

century, but an up-to-date and technologically advanced compositional method. There are few authors, especially Bulgarian authors, who come up with the appeal to conquer something completely new in compositional theory, which defines a new sound appearance, which "switches directions" of series and folklore, authentic-postavantgarde and Western European and folklore, asymmetrical. It is as if Dragostinov is the bearer of the answers to questions asked by the last century the discoverers of asymmetry such as Djudjev, as the interpreter and as a compositional phenomenon - O. Messian and Bartok - and then - as the creating elements of new concepts of musical time, tied to the "meeting" of past/present and future in postmodernism such as Zimmerman, Noncorau, Ligeti.

Stefan Dragostinov's research is unusually vivid and representative, innovative, it is a kind of challenge to contemporary more amorphous notions of the idea of philosophy and composition theory. At the same time, the work is a challenge that a Bulgarian author-representative of the New Music has addressed to the Western European XX and XXI centuries. Finally - this is a work that can be done next to those of Messian "Treatise on Rhythm, color and ornithology", to the corresponding and too thoroughly read by Dragostinov texts by Stockhausen and others. large figures.

This work is not just a text of research or a doctorate, it is a phenomenon in philosophy and composition theory, it has great innovative value in what is written in Bulgarian by Bulgarian composers. Given the extremely high innovation and contribution value of this work, I suggest to the honorable jury to award our great composer and unique figure in the theory and poetics of musical composition for the 20th and 21st centuries with the scientific and educational degree "Doctor".

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