

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Kremena Angelova,
National Academy of Music "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov",
for the dissertation of Teodor Todorov Popov
"ELECTRONIC SOUND DESIGN AND ITS APPLICATIONS
IN DJING"

for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
in scientific specialty 05.08.02. Musicology and Music Art,
professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art,
research supervisor - Prof. Dr. Simo Lazarov

Teodor Popov graduated from New Bulgarian University with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Technologies with a specialization in Computer Music and a Master's degree in Sound Engineering. He is currently working as a sound engineer at Bulgarian National Radio – Regional radio station Plovdiv, where he is actively involved in numerous concert and studio performances and broadcasts.

He is interested in composition and works as a freelance and live performer. He organizes and participates in various public events, forums, competitions and festivals. In 2021, he was part of the team of students that were awarded the "Crystal Lyre" by the Union of Bulgarian Musicians and Dancers.

His research interests lie within the fields of computer music, sound design and DJing.

The dissertation of Teodor Popov consists of an introduction, 5 chapters, a conclusion, a list of contributions and a bibliography, as well as 2 appendices and lists of figures and tables. The work has a total length of 333 pages, with the main text spread over 232 pages, and is a topical exploration of the relationship and dependencies between electronic sound design and DJing as a practical, creative and musical reality.

The contributions of the research are outlined in the text of the thesis (p.233) and the abstract, which in a very concise form (38 pages) manages to give an idea of the qualities of the overall text. The abstract also lists the four papers on the topic published between 2020 and 2022.

In the **introduction**, the state of the problem is analyzed, a brief

characterization of electronic sound design and DJing is offered, and the main theoretical developments studied and used are outlined.

The Ph.D. student states that the purpose of the dissertation is the investigation of "the relationship and dependencies between electronic sound design (with its means of creating rich soundscapes using electronic musical instrumentarium and computer technology) and the nature of DJing as a practical, creative and musical reality". Five main tasks are also formulated, derived from the main purpose, which in practice represent stages of the research and essentially coincide with the main chapters of the theoretical elaboration.

In addition, the subject and object of the research are also defined in the introduction, and the author finds it necessary to clarify the essence of the scientific concepts "subject" and "object" of the research. A similar didactic approach is used later on in the main text, which I consider inappropriate and unnecessary.

The hypothesis of the study is formulated incorrectly and does not give a clear picture of the author's position or preliminary scientific proposition.

There is a serious imbalance in the distribution of the theoretical material in the individual chapters, with chapters one, three and four being extremely short at the expense of the huge volume of chapter two, which effectively takes up half the thesis. I believe that a reworking of the structure of the dissertation and a rebalancing of the length of the individual chapters by redistributing the information within them was necessary. For example, **chapter one** could easily be part of the introduction, as it does not deal with the subject and object of the research in substance. It clarifies, as it were for the doctoral student himself, the methodological foundations of the research and brings to our knowledge several fundamental principles, some of which are not relevant to the dissertation.

Chapter two describes in historical terms the evolution of electronic instrumentation, electronic sound design, equipment and technology of the process as well as the emergence and development of DJing as a direct result of these. The chapter deals with essential issues, examining them in considerable

detail. Individual topics include technical and technological progress, electronic devices, sound synthesis methods, electronic musical instrumentation divided into two generations, physical and electroacoustic characterization of sound, electronic sound design, electronic and computer music.

The proposed theoretical scope is enormous and should be subjected to both reorganization and shortening. The doctoral student makes the common mistake of explaining universally known facts and concepts, which leads to an increase in textual length and makes it difficult to follow the line of the narrative. I believe that the title of the chapter is also inaccurate in its meaning and terminology. Within the work, the term *рефлексия* (*reflection*) is used incorrectly, and the term *темпорален* (*temporal*) is a direct translation from another language and should be replaced with appropriate Bulgarian words.

When it comes to the topics related to the electronic sound design and especially DJing, however, the situation changes and the narrative becomes smooth, interestingly presented and enthusiastic. The professional expertise of the Ph.D. student, the knowledge of the processes and the undisguised interest in the proposed topics is impressive. I consider this part of the dissertation to be particularly valuable and revealing of the author's attitude to the given issues.

At the beginning of **chapter three**, the Ph.D. student aims to make a theoretical "exploration of the concepts reflecting the essence and specificity of electronic sound design and DJing and their boundaries as sound form, technology and activity". In practice, the chapter is concerned with elucidating the philosophical, logical and semantic aspects of electronic sound design and DJing. Without unnecessary didacticism and explication of the meaning of each concept, this section of the work clearly sets the boundaries of electronic sound design and DJing, albeit in a telegraphic style. Again, I would note the opportunity to reconsider the place of this section in the thesis as part of a more extended introductory chapter aimed at setting the basis of the research.

Chapter four deals with the evolution of electronic musical instruments and technical devices in electronic sound design and DJing. In the text, on page 158, the wording "electronic sound design" is omitted in the chapter title. This

completely changes the essence of the section, but since this text is present in the table of contents and the abstract, I consider its absence to be a technical error that should be corrected.

Despite its small size, it offers three subsections. The first two deal with the historical development of electronic musical instruments and their systematization in various tables (in reverse order). The third subsection deals with a comparative analysis of two DJ sets, in an attempt to illustrate the specificity of the DJ's work. Again, the author's familiarity with and command of the subject matter is clearly evident here, but I find the logical arrangement of the text to be unsound and rather cumbersome. It is noteworthy that the results of the study are presented as appendices, which are a brief encyclopaedic reference without any particular scientific value.

Chapter five also brings together two topics that are not directly related, namely a practical guide for working with DENON MCX 8000 and two interviews – with Minko Krastev, chief engineer at Bulgarian National Radio – Regional radio station Plovdiv, and Toma Sprostranov.

The two interviews are of utmost importance for the dissertation, as they reveal the process of emergence and development of DJing in our country, as a consequence of the technological development that has been taking place for years in the centres of the Bulgarian National Radio. Despite some inaccuracies in dating, they add value to the text and clarify the ‘theory-practice’ relationship.

The conclusions provide a thorough overview of the theses presented in this dissertation without offering any new information or perspective.

The doctoral student offers 6 scientific contributions to the research, which I accept without comment.

The bibliography is extensive, mostly in Bulgarian and Russian, with the use of a large number of Internet resources. The appendices are voluminous and well illustrated.

Despite the remarks made, I consider Teodor Popov's work to be an independent study with a contribution to the history and theory of musical art.

The topic is relevant, and the systematization of the materials allows for an easy examination of the research object.

In conclusion, I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award to Teodor Todorov Popov the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” in the professional field 8.3 “Music and Dance Art”.

Prof. Dr. Kremena Angelova

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