

„The unachievable sound of the bagpipe“

Monograph paper

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Abstract: The monograph paper „**The unachievable sound of the bagpipe**“ is a detailed study of the work, biography and musical heritage of Nikola Atanasov. Paper reviewers are Assistant Prof. Maria Stoianova and Prof. Ph.D Borislav Iasenov, and scientific advisor – Assistant Prof. Ph.D Rada Slavinska. The monograph size is one hundred and sixty-one pages, organized in fourteen sections. Other than biographical data about the player, it contains a systematic presentation of his repertoire in a spreadsheet format as recorded in the archives of the Bulgarian National Radio. The paper contains a few musically-aesthetic analyses of selected works, that potentially could contribute to the professional and aesthetic worldview, the growth and development of the performance-creative model in the rising bagpipe performers. Traced are the specific interpretative techniques of this renown Bulgarian bagpiper – techniques like (performance precision), articulation, metro-rhythmic sense, dialect preferences and personal manner when these are performed, intonational clarity and ensemble participation, phrasing, ornamentation, vibratos, etc. Systematically are considered the definitive conclusions, contributing to the correct interpretation of the performance, the techniques and mastery of Nikola Atanasov. In the included score examples are deciphered few notorious pieces by Nikola Atanasov (“Ratcheniza”, “Easter dance”, “Slow song and dance”, “Ratcheniza from Karnobat”). For very first time an active bagpipe performer and instructor is studying the manner and the traits of the personal performance signature of another bagpipe player.

THE TERM “BAGPIPING STYLE” IN THE BULGARIAN MUSICOLOGY PUBLICATIONS

publications

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Abstract: Without being theoretically researched and analyzed in research papers, the term “bagpiping style” is common in the colloquial speech. The term is yet to be clarified in the academic publications. In Bulgaria, the “bagpiping style” is mainly mentioned as “Thracian” and “Rhodope”, but in my personal experience as a performer, I have found clear regional differences in the bagpipe melodies in various regions. In my opinion, the classification of the “Thracian” style as a kind of all-Bulgarian style, is way too general and does not accurately reflect the existing musical environment. Performer’s style is determined mainly from the fundamental link between the song and instrumental melody. It is the close connection with the song that determines the specific for each folklore region tonal, melodic, ornamental, and metric property of the style. The instruments quality and the performers skill are the fundamental requirements for personal attitudes, that on their own often affect the style evolution. The style, however, is not causally related to the quality of the instruments or the performer. Taking into consideration few definitions

by various authors, I can define the term “style” as: The “style” is a union of tonal, metro-rhythmic and temporal traits of the folklore music in particular region, combined with specific ornamentation, in a particular period of time. At the same time, the “style” is a filtered and summarized reflection of multitude of personal performer techniques, which can be considered as a common trait, notwithstanding the personal differences. The “style” is a unified musical expression of the factually regional. In the Bulgarian folklore music the instrumental styles, and in particular the bagpiping “style”, in fact present an instrumental embodiment of the song styles in the folklore regions. The definition for dialect (authentic) bagpiping “style”, then must read like: Union of specific for a particular folklore-dialect region traits of the traditional song musical culture – metro-rhythmic, melody, ornaments, tonal organization – carried into the bagpiping performer practice. The types of the dialect bagpiping “style” in Bulgaria follow the systemized, researched and scientifically defined song musical-folklore dialects – “Shop”, “Pirin”, “Rhodope”, “Thracian”, “Strandja”, “Northern” and “Dobrudja”. Clarifying the terminology, related to folklore-performance bagpiping specifics, is an important element not only in the musicology studies. It has a direct link with the instructional and methodological work of the instrument teacher.

Keywords: bagpipe, style, dialect, folklore, performer technique

Area: Humanities

Some aspects of the bagpipe performance challenges

publications

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Abstract: The bagpipe is one of the most interesting and attractive instruments in the Bulgarian folklore toolset. The role of the bagpipe and the bagpipe performers for centuries has been central to the holiday and working cycle of the Bulgarians – weddings, christenings, calendar rites, gatherings, dances, feasts, work, etc. This predetermines the attention focus on the bagpipe players – their performance, vision, the decoration of their instrument, the appeal of their overall behavior. In the past, no one was interested in construction changes and improvements of the instrument. If the instrument fit into the hands of the performer and if it covers the required minimum of intonational demands – it was ready for use. Mainly individual performances in the past didn't require precision in the tuning and the intonation by the performer. The “New Age”, the new requirements, the new intonational environment, enforced a new view and methods for explanation and instruction of the modifications that have occurred in the traditional sound extraction. The interaction between the various musical styles, the combination between classical, modern and folklore instruments lead to and increased the need for precision in the tuning as well as in the synchronicity of the ornamentation, phrasing, etc. The good bagpipers have always looked for the overall effect that their performances had on the public – psychological, aesthetic, simply human. Clarifying the terminology, related to the folklore-performing bagpiping specifics, is an important element not only in the musicological studies. The systematization of the reviewed specific performer challenges when a bagpiper performer, is a result of my perennial practice as performer and pedagogue. These are interpreted and considered through the desire for achieving performance

mastery. These conclusions were reached as a consequence of the significant number of various bagpipes that I had the chance to use for my performances over the years. These include the instruments made by various craftsmen, the bagpipes of my pupils and students, experimentations with the bagpipes of my colleagues, my personal instruments collection, etc. The conclusions and findings were verified in practice. Clarification of the issues faced by the performers reveals in theoretical sense the “technical” part of the evolutionary processes in the bagpipe performing art that occurred after the streamlining of the folklore music in the 20th century. It also has a direct link to the pedagogical and methodical work of the bagpipe instructors.

Keywords: bagpipe, folklore, performing techniques, performer’s challenges

Area: Humanities

Diagonal dissection of a bagpiper’s handwriting publications

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Abstract: The paper reviews part of the bagpiper Nikola Atanasov musical works. He is one of the most renowned representatives of the Bulgarian bagpiping art, who has left a significant trait with his work. Analyzed are some of his most famous pieces, demonstrating his beyond local determinism, precision in his knowledge of the dialect specifics and works that demonstrate the technical and improvisation qualities of Nikola Atanasov.

Keywords: Nikola Atanasov, bagpipe, bagpiping style