

# OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. V. Karagenova, PhD  
on the dissertation work of Dimitar Nakov

## THE PIANO IN THE SOLO PIANO AND CHAMBER-ENSEMBLE WORKS OF IVAN SPASOV (THEORETICAL AND INTERPRETATIVE ASPECTS OF THE KEYBOARD ARTICULATION)

AM DFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev”  
Department of Piano and Accordion

Ivan Spasov's creative legacy is part of the musical culture of Bulgaria, the musical history of Plovdiv and the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. The “life” and fate of this work depends on us as a society, and on our personal responsibility as musicians. In this sense, I accept the choice of the topic of my colleague Dimitar Nakov as significant, important and responsible. The presence of the authoritative research on Spasov's piano work by authors such as Prof. Ts. Andreeva and Prof R. Smilkov and the vivid interpretations of this work, realized by many Bulgarian pianists, pose the challenge for the doctoral candidate to seek new spaces, new aspects in the composer's music, to find other different, but inherent, "original" characteristics that emphasize its identity. Therefore, it makes a good impression that D. Nakov has managed to find his field of expression, to construct the different or to build on what has already been said.

The candidate chose a research object the piano solo and ensemble works of Ivan Spasov and has brought as a problem the interpretive aspects of articulation and the complex spectrum of relationships with other means of expression. The study is structured in three chapters, including 73 musical examples. There are two appendixes and a bibliography with 95 sources. In the period of his doctoral studies D. Nakov has realized 3 publications on the topic in specialized publications of AMTII. Directly related to the topic of doctoral thesis are also the six concerts with music by I. Spasov – an integral performance of all his piano works.

In the **first chapter**, which serves as a starting point for the research, D. Nakov offers a brief structural and aesthetic analysis of Spasov's piano works, grouping them by genre and in chronological order. The emphasis on the concrete allows the candidate to interpret analytically the diversity in the palette of contemporary musical thinking of Spasov, by refining the style filter, which shapes the individuality and recognizability of the composer.

The **second chapter** clarifies the meaning and significance of articulation as a concept and its close connection with the musical expression of a work. The doctoral candidate rightly notes that in addition to the performing technical problem, the articulation defines the "expression" of the melodic line and is directly related to the "construction of the character of the image". The chapter traces specific problems of piano articulation in Spasov's works. In it, the proposed performative decisions are derived from the personal experience of the candidate as a performer.

The **third chapter** traces the processes of interaction and correlation between the musical means of expression and the structural elements in Spasov's piano works. It discusses the connections between articulation - caesura, accentuation and cluster.

I would like to highlight a few points that are particularly important in this study:

1. The markedly practical orientation of the topic: the performing-interpretative approach to the chosen issues and its detailed presentation would be a good support in the work of any young musician tempted by Spasov's work or seeking contact with contemporary art in general. The universality of the described principles allows their wide application in the piano music, created since the second half of the twentieth century. The focus on them - through the specifics of Spasov's piano style, gives the opportunity to feel the richness of ideas in this music, to feel the qualities and depth of the works, drawing the current dimensions of the contemporary piano problems.

2. The focus on one of the main means of expression in Spasov's work – the articulation, which at the same time is entirely within the scope of the performer, his aesthetic views and capabilities. As Spasov himself says, his music is a game of microelements - melodic, rhythmic, articulatory, timbre. In the last two, the professional view of the interpreter is decisive for the suggestion. Articulation, understood as "pronunciation", is an important element in any performing foundation, but it becomes especially valuable in the interpretation of contemporary work, whose abstract symbolic content relies heavily on the pianist. Finding the optimal set of means for its true presentation, to convey the freedom of the author's expression is the main "mission" of the performer.

3. The personal attitude of the doctoral candidate to the chosen topic and the included personal experience. The search for interrelations and interaction between composer's and performer's means of expression, of balance between composer's texture decisions and their performance, their competent combination shows the author's personal attitude to the problem, his interest, personal skills as performer and at the same time as a teacher. In fact, in my opinion, when the performance of a work or part of someone's work becomes a subject, an

impulse for research, the result is always more convincing. In this regard, I appreciate the concert work of D. Nakov, the realized concerts - part of the doctoral dissertation - reveal him as a pianist with a sense of the culture of contemporary narrative and as a competent and full performer and interpreter of Ivan Spasov's music. If we refer again to the thoughts of the composer: "All the mastery and class (of a performer) remain barren, if they are not tested and crowned in the performance of our Bulgarian music ... then they make sense." And the contemporary Bulgarian composer seeks the "moral support" of the artist and is grateful for it.

The professional contacts with the academic supervisor, Prof R. Bogdanova – one of the first performers and bright interpreters of Spasov's music, obviously played an important role in the development and growth of Nakov, both personally and professionally. The passing of tradition between different generations makes it possible to preserve valuable creative and interpretive information.

In conclusion: I accept the dissertation presented for defense and propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Dimitar Nakov.