

REVIEW

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“Prof. Asen Diamandiev” – Plovdiv

By order No RD-27-104 dated 11.07.2024 of the Rector of AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev”, Plovdiv, I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury to supervise a procedure for the defense of a dissertation work titled *The Relation of Improvisation to Composition, Arrangement, and Lineup of the Contemporary Jazz Band*, for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree **Doctor** in Higher education field 8. Arts, Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art. The author of the dissertation is Miroslav Ivanov Turiyski – doctoral student at the Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performing Arts, Faculty of Music Pedagogy, with academic supervisor Prof Веселин Койчев from AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev” – Plovdiv.

The materials presented to me include the following documents:

- CV;
- dissertation work;
- abstract;
- list of scientific publications.

I have known the candidate Miroslav Turiyski since his youth, when he performed as a jazz pianist. Even then, his ambition to develop and improve his skills in the field of jazz art was evident.

Miroslav Turiyski completed his secondary education at the High School of Mathematics "Acad. Kiril Popov", Plovdiv. He continued his higher education at the National Academy of Music "Prof Pancho Vladigerov", Sofia, where he received a Bachelor's degree, majoring in Jazz Piano, and subsequently received a Master's degree in Pop and Jazz piano at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv. He is doctoral student in independent form of study at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv.

Turiyski's artistic work is particularly active and rich. His first more serious stage appearances date back to 1997, when he performed as a jazz pianist at the "Youth Jazz Meeting" forum, organized many times over the years by the iconic ensemble White, Green, Red until 1999. Numerous concerts and projects followed, in which Turiyski participated as a pianist, band leader or sideman. He has played at all important jazz festivals in Bulgaria: Plovdiv Jazz Fest, Plovdiv Jazz Evenings, Bansko Jazz Fest, Apolonia, Sofia Music Jam, Burgas Jazz, Varna Summer, Haskovo Jazz Fest, etc.

He works as a pianist, music director and arranger abroad. Here we can note some of the more significant such as: *Cesar Sampson in Linz*, part of the classical festival in Linz, Austria, for 3 years he was the Music Director and pianist of the English show Christmas Crooners, with a tour of over 60 concert in Great Britain and Ireland. Had two tours in Canada at the invitation of BAFC (Bulgarian Art Festival in Canada), as well as appearances at international jazz festivals or stages in Italy, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Romania, Turkey, Serbia, Cyprus, Macedonia, Dubai, Morocco,

Norway and Austria.

He works in projects with Bulgarian and foreign artists such as: Teodosiy Spasov, Miroslava Katsarova, Caesar Samson, Teodora Enache, Petar Salchev, Hristo Yotsov, Hilda Kazasyan, Beloslava, Orlin Pavlov, Stefan Valdobrev, Vasil Petrov and many others.

He composes, arranges and performs music in a wide range of genres - from jazz, pop-rock to film or theater music, as well as for various ensembles – from a jazz combo to a large orchestra.

He is the founder and leader of the ensemble Octet Plovdiv, which brings together bright Plovdiv jazz musicians of his generation. The ensemble gained popularity and success both with the author's instrumental music and with the collaboration with famous soloists.

The teaching work of the candidate is related to AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv. He teaches the disciplines Pop and Jazz Piano and Improvisation and Piano Accompaniment. In addition to academics, Turiyski helps develop talented students, giving them the opportunity to perform, as an organizer of jam sessions in clubs.

The author's interest in the topic of the dissertation is provoked by his professional practice and the desire to contribute to the growth of young musicians with the knowledge and skills regarding the place, role and possibilities of improvisation in different situations.

Improvisation is an important element of the modern musicianship, fundamental to jazz, which is why it is a frequently discussed topic in contemporary scholarly works. The relevance of the topic of the dissertation in this case is determined by the point of view and the approach of the author to the problem under consideration that facilitate the perception and understanding of the elements that determine the structure of the jazz improvisation, as well as its place and role determined by the factors composition, arrangement, number of members and conceptual concept. It originates in the dynamics in the development of modern jazz art and the need to examine, analyze and renew the approaches in the teaching methodology for each musical instrument, in particular the jazz piano, as well as their practical use.

Clarifying the specifics of using improvisation, created by the various situations proposed in the concerts and analyses, will help to form a musical-aesthetic and stylistic basis and a characteristic manner towards the improvisational process.

The object of the research is jazz improvisation and its relationship with the composition, arrangement, performance line-up and timbres in specific pieces from the concerts part of the research.

The subject of the study is the organic connection and interaction of components such as:

- jazz theory;
- the place of improvisation in the context of the overall performance;
- the dependence of improvisation on the composition, arrangement and performance.

The goal of the dissertation is to shed light on the relationship and opportunities for improvisation provided by the composition, arrangement and performing ensemble, as well as the creative situation in which the soloist demonstrates improvisational mastery. To what extent the

different styles and factors described above contribute to the conduct of improvisation.

The tasks set in the research are:

- a brief overview of the musical elements in jazz music – terminology, notation and designations that have become established in jazz practice;
- consideration of some important approaches and factors concerning theoretical jazz improvisation;
- presentation of the concerts realized in support of the scientific hypothesis;
- in-depth analysis of a piece from each concert;
- based on the analysis to make comparisons and parallels about the place of improvisation in different situations;
- drawing findings regarding the researched topic.

According to the scientific hypothesis, the freedom to improvise is directly related to the arrangement and the members of the group. The author believes that it is inversely proportional to the complexity of the arrangement and the number of performers in the lineup.

The practical contribution is expressed in the clarification of essential elements of the theory of jazz music, summarized and systematized in a method that will help the pedagogical work.

In the introduction of the study, Turiyski presents the object, the subject, the goal, and the tasks, explains the practical contribution and presents the scientific hypothesis.

In Chapter One - Brief Theory of Jazz, the author examines basic rules helping the interpretative-creative process in jazz – notation of chords, their relationship with scales, approaches to building melodic jazz improvisation and harmonization of the melodic line.

The second chapter - Concerts describes the six concerts, a mandatory part of the artistic doctoral studies. The doctoral student has approached according to the purpose of the research by realizing concerts that are diverse in nature and performance composition.

The circumstances practically help to analyze the various factors that determine the manner of improvisation.

Diversity is achieved on the basis of:

- the number of performers in the band and the possibilities for interactive communication between them during improvisation, as well as the different function that each performs in the ensemble;
- the composition - fundamental to the character and direction of building the improvisation;
- the arrangement carrying nuances in the interpretation and sound of the composition, and also a determining factor for the character of the improvisation;
- the performance style of the jazz piece;
- the overall concept – the basis of the creative and executive process uniting the above-described components.

According to the author, the different type of stage implies a specific attitude towards the

interpretation: in the concert hall, the performer should adhere more strictly to the sheet music, and on a club stage, he should allow himself more freedom.

The concept of *Time After Time* Miroslava Katsarova's concert, presented as the first, is that the interpretation adheres to the classical sound of jazz, and not so much to its improvisational essence.

The concert entitled *Folklore Meets Jazz*, from Theodosiy Spasov's project, proposed as the second one, is characterized by a synthesis between jazz and folk music.

Project and promotion of the album *Next Step*, created by the idea of the drummer Hristo Yotsov. Characteristic of the sound is that the bass part is played by the doctoral student both with his left hand on a bass timbre synthesizer and with his left foot on a MIDI keyboard modeled after an organ pedal and using the bass timbre of the same synthesizer. In this situation, the pianist has more freedom in performing the harmony.

At the Octet Plovdiv concert, the author adheres to the genre style characteristic of a brass band.

In the concert *Standards – Turiyski Standard Trio* and Michel Nahabedian, the doctoral student presents standards, songs from musicals written in 1920s and 1930s by authors such as George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Victor Young, etc., who entered the jazz practice, performed as instrumental pieces.

The chamber jazz concert for piano and guitar entitled *Interaction* is based on the improvisation and creative interaction between the two instruments.

In the third chapter - Detailed analyzes of six pieces, musical-aesthetic analyzes of pieces, one from a concert, are made, corresponding to the different approach in the performance of jazz music, a variety that tends to be sought in the concepts of concerts.

In the Fourth Chapter - Analysis of the Study. Parallels, conclusions are made noting the place and role of improvisation in the concept of the author and the performers. Criteria have been created used by the author to argue his assessment:

- improvisation during soloing
- during accompaniment;
- interaction between the performers.

Charts are attached that visualize the percentage for improvisation in the performance. The assessments and parallels made support the hypothesis that the freedom of improvisation in the performance is directly dependent on the complexity of the composition and arrangement and on the performers. With a more complex arrangement and more performers, improvisation takes up less space in the performance, and of the two factors, the complexity of the arrangement has a greater weight.

The research analyzes the relationship between harmony, melody and rhythm in improvisation in jazz music in different situations. Attention has been paid to the importance of the professional skills and individuality of the musicians participating in the ensemble, as well as to the communication between them, contributing to a high level of performance and an impressive construction of the

artistic image. The author defends the hypothesis that the freedom, place and role of improvisation is dependent on the style, composition, arrangement, musicians in the ensemble and the overall concept of interpretation of the work.

The dissertation uses the theoretical method related to a brief theory of jazz and analysis of works, as well as the empirical research method. The two methods are united in a complex approach, by analyzing and presenting works from the concert programs. This creates a prerequisite for an easier understanding of the basics of jazz improvisation in Pop and jazz piano education, illuminates its place and role based on the considered factors and the musician's personal approach. The discussed issues will enrich the musical-aesthetic worldview and the theoretical-practical skills of the budding pianist-performers and will expand the competences of the music educators. The above determines the contribution nature of the dissertation.

The work meets the requirements for theoretical research. The study includes: introduction, four chapters, conclusion, contributions, bibliography and appendices, with a total volume of 145 pages, of which 100 are main text. The explanations are substantiated with appropriate notational examples that contribute to creating an even clearer idea of the subject under consideration. The bibliography includes 21 titles in Cyrillic, 24 in Latin, as well as 11 Internet sources.

The contributions of the dissertation are the following:

- synthesized summaries of jazz theory are made, which, outside the context of the dissertation, can be used in teaching jazz improvisation;
- concerts were held with pieces composed or arranged especially for the purpose, which enrich the jazz practice;
- analyzes of basic elements of the practical side of jazz improvisation provide methodical guidelines focused on important performance details;
- the place and function of individual performers in the construction of jazz improvisation is noted;
- the importance of interaction within the jazz ensemble is also indicated.

The list of the scientific publications indicates that they are three in number and are directly related to the topic of the dissertation work, which logically finalizes the author's scientific research until now.

They are as follows:

- *Relation between chords and scales in jazz improvisation*, AMDFA Yearbook, 2020, ISSN 1313-6526, pp. 87 - 97;
- *Melodic Line Reharmonization Approaches*, Spring Scientific Readings, AMDFA, 2020, ISSN 1314-7005, pp. 89 - 95;
- *Three Approaches to Constructing Melodic Jazz Improvisation*, Spring Scientific Readings, AMDFA, 2021, ISSN 1314-7005, pp. 58-64.

The abstract is prepared according to the requirements and reflects the main results achieved in

the dissertation.

In conclusion, I will point out that the dissertation work of Miroslav Ivanov Turiyski, titled *The Relation of Improvisation to Composition, Arrangement, and Musicians of the Contemporary Jazz Band*, impressed me with the subject matter, the analyzes and the scientific-theoretical justification, as well as with the qualitative examples that help to understand the research more clearly. It is clear from what is presented in the work that Miroslav Turiyski is a musician with excellent musical-theoretical training and active concert practice. I believe that the theoretical work meets the requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" set forth by the Academic Staff Development Act and the Regulations for its application. This gives me reason to propose to the respected scientific jury to award Miroslav Ivanov Turiyski the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art.

17.09.2024

Reviewer:
(Prof Borislav Yasenov)