

## REVIEW

by Prof Simo Leonov Lazarov

on the dissertation work of

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doctoral student at AMDFA, Plovdiv

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in a professional field

8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific

titled

### **The Relation of Improvisation to Composition, Arrangement, and Musicians of the Contemporary Jazz Band**

Miroslav Ivanov Turiyski is born on 21.11.1980 in the Plovdiv. Receives Bachelor's degree at National Music Academy "Pancho Vladigerov" and Master's at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, Plovdiv. Regular participant as a jazz pianist, music director, group leader in projects, participant in jazz festivals, such as Plovdiv Jazz Fest, Plovdiv Jazz Evenings, Bansko Jazz Fest, Apollonia, Sofia Music Jam, Burgas Jazz, Varna Summer, Haskovo Jazz Fest and other Bulgarian jazz festivals.

In addition to Bulgaria, he has worked as pianist, music director and arranger also abroad: Music director, arranger-orchestrator and pianist in *Cesar Sampson in Linz*, Austria, Music director and pianist for three years in the English show Christmas Crooners, with a tour of over 60 concerts in the UK and Ireland. Two tours in Canada at the invitation of BAFC (Bulgarian Art Festival in Canada) with numerous appearances at international jazz festivals and stages in Italy, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Romania, Turkey, Serbia, Cyprus, Macedonia, Dubai, Morocco, Norway, Austria.

He works in projects with Bulgarian and foreign artists as a pianist and/ or music director, composer and arranger with Theodosiy Spasov, Miroslava Katsarova, Caesar Samson, Teodora Enache, Petar Salchev, Hristo Yotsov, Hilda Kazasyan, Beloslava, Orlin Pavlov, Stefan Valdobrev, Vasil Petrov and many others.

Turiyski composes, arranges and performs music in a wide range of genres and ensembles: from jazz combo to symphony orchestra or big band; from jazz, pop-rock to film or theater music. He is the founder, pianist, composer and music director of Octet Plovdiv.

As a teacher at AMDFA in Jazz Piano and Improvisation, he passes his experience and knowledge to young musicians, organizes sessions and gatherings on club stages.

The dissertation contains 145 pages divided into introduction, four chapters, conclusion, contributions, bibliography with 21 titles in Cyrillic, 24 in Latin, as well as 11 Internet sources and appendices.

According to Turiyski, "*Today, music is not only art, but also a science, with its own language and solid, methodological foundations.*" This thought of his is developed in the dissertation work.

The real focus of the research, described in the dissertation, gravitates around the presumption that the process of making jazz music provokes inspiration. This idea appears also as a result of the knowledge acquired in the process of his studies and subsequently as a synthesis of his fundamental knowledge on jazz composition and artistic practices, evolution, as well as a study of the basic methods and means by which this process is created. The object, subject, methodology, purpose and tasks of the research are clearly outlined.

The object of the study is jazz improvisation as a function of composition, arrangement and the band.

In the subject of the study, attention is mainly paid to the place of improvisation in the context of the overall performance and the dependence of improvisation on the composition, the arrangement and the band.

The main goal is to clarify the relationship between the possibilities for improvisation and to analyze the possible directions for improvisation. The problem touched on in the exposition about freedom and the limitations in improvisation is interesting.

The tasks that are set in the research are related to the language of jazz music, the important approaches and factors related to the theory of jazz improvisation, using the analyses made, comparisons should be made about the place of improvisation in the different stylistic and genre features of the pieces.

The freedom of improvisation is directly related to the arrangement and the performing musicians, and this is the scientific hypothesis of the dissertation work. And through the practical contribution, important elements of jazz theory are clarified, which carry the weight of the educational potential.

The "language of Jazz" and important insights from jazz improvisation theory are covered in the first chapter. The principles of chord buildup and the relationships that exist between harmony, melody and rhythm are described consistently and analytically.

The letter designations of chords, the relationship between chords and scales, approaches to building melodic jazz improvisation and approaches to harmonizing a melodic line are described in detail. Many sheet music examples are given which are the basis of jazz improvisation. It is noted that in order to achieve this goal, specific tasks are always set for implementation through the analysis of the chord structure.

The descriptive nature does not diminish the value of the research, but on the contrary – it supports the statement that obtaining knowledge requires musical practical skills beyond purely theoretical ones. The doctoral student expresses the thesis that the appearance of musical thought by association occurs in the same way as the idea of creating a melody is launched as provoked and

shaped by the circumstances in which it arises, and the idea of it is realized according to the creative fantasy of the musicians.

The dissertation describes the influence of different characteristics of harmonization in the process of creation and perception. The peculiarities and the ways of solving them in the specific musical drama are outlined. A suitable example is given with an extremely well-known melody which, when harmonized in a different way, gives particular associative moods. The author proves that quite a few phenomena in the skillful harmonization show the same principled approach in their structure, and one of the main properties that are found is a similarity between the predictable nuances.

Chapter two details six concerts. As the candidate writes:

*"An attempt has been made to seek as wide a variety of performances as possible that place the improvisation in different situations. This is also evident from the performers and the repertoire of the various concerts."* An interesting point is the diversity in the lineup of the performers and the subsequent repertoire. In the six concerts, the diversity and variety of subsequent performances is evident. For the sake of completeness, I am listing the concerts:

1. "Time After Time" - concert by Miroslava Katsarova
2. "Folklore meets jazz" with the project Faith by Theodosiy Spasov
3. Project and promotion of the album Next Step
4. Concert of Octet Plovdiv
5. "Standards" - Turkish Standard Trio and Michel Nakhabyan
6. "Interaction" - chamber jazz concert for piano and guitar.

The lineup and the necessity of interactive communication between the musicians are described in detail, as well as the different function of the musicians in the distribution of parts within the band. The piece being performed should be fundamental to the direction for improvisation. From there follows the next step analyzed by the doctoral student - the arrangement.

The arrangement – here you can see the freedom for improvisation depending on the complexity of the different musical parts. The style, with its specificity, obliges the musicians to a great extent to comply with the way of performance.

The overall concept is laid as a foundation and the attitude towards the performance itself depends on it. The author writes: *"The same band with the same repertoire can sound differently depending on the performance concept. The different type of stage, for example, implies a different attitude towards musical performance"*.

These features are in the context of the overall performance, preparation and organization of the concert. There is a difference in the venue of the concert. As Turiyski writes: *"In the concert hall a stricter adherence to the musical text is expected, while on a club stage the performance may be less formal and allow more freedom."*

In the third chapter, the author offers a detailed analysis of six plays. The description of the six plays takes us away from the strictly theoretical scientific approach, but highlights the practical experience of the doctoral student, who "arranges" verbally these complex plays with enviable ease.

It is proven that quite a few phenomena in the creation of these plays show the same principled approach in their structure, and one of the main properties that are found as a certain type is the similarity between the different arrangements. In a well-balanced sequence, the details and problems of modeling compositional procedures are considered, in which the choice of approach of improvisation methods is leading. The techniques and application of models are presented.

In the fourth chapter, the overall performance of the plays is analyzed, introducing general criteria for evaluating the possibilities for improvisation in each of the analyzed plays. Based on the analyses, a justified assessment of the freedom for improvisation is given.

The exposition refers to the musical-constructive aspect in the creation of the music and the realization of the musical score. The composer's approach to the distribution of the specific musical means is examined in detail - the improvisational beginning takes precedence in the study, but this is necessary in order to be able to present here, on the basis of a comparative analysis, the artistic-creative image, the relevant instrumentation and the composition of the performers. Attention is paid to decisions about the styles of the music in the context of the pieces being performed.

The stage performance is formulated in three positions and they are:

1. Improvisation during soloing
2. Improvisation with accompaniment;
3. Interaction between the performers.

The results are presented with mathematical precision and graphical analysis. Using the comparative analysis, the introduced evaluation criteria are visualized. With the results of the analysis, the author proves that the freedom for improvisation in the performance is directly dependent on the complexity of the composition, the arrangement and the performers.

The place of improvisation in the overall performance is the result of a summative assessment. The graph visualizes the percentage ratio between the freedom of improvisation in the performance. These studies can be used for analysis when creating a piece of music. The study also includes the most popular methods that are used for composing. Methods of creating music are explored, as well as specific characteristics that determine the creation of this music. The study of these basic methods for improvisation can serve to create new jazz pieces in order to find the most optimal system to create an algorithm for the respective style. This can also be a new direction of development of the idea, with which the doctoral student can continue his research.

The professional approach in the analysis of creating a new piece in the relevant musical style with the attached musical examples creates a prerequisite for a serious scientific justification of the problems related to the topic of the dissertation work, which makes it scientifically applicable in future research projects. This study also provides new prerequisites for the creation of a foundation for the

construction of a coherent theory for the creation of a universal musical work, in which inspiration plays a leading role. The criteria necessary for this serve to increase the creative qualification of the musician in the process of construction, which is only related to author's original ideas, which statement is correct due to the fact that creativity must be innovative and, of course, original.

As the doctoral student rightly asserts: *"Improvisation is an accompanying part of the musical performance and as such cannot be quantified with mathematical precision. But the assessment criteria introduced in this way and the wide range of assessment values allow to see more clearly and to make a comparison for the place and in the considered situations, with the provision that this is still not mathematics, but art"*.

The processes of creating the music are described by the author consistently and methodically in the context of musical presence and in the light of the improvisational beginning. An analysis and extensive review of the characteristics of the compositional-improvisational techniques was also made. Attention is paid to the genre features of the performed plays. The characteristics of genre features are analyzed. The analysis is interesting and this kind of music is considered as a function of its future application.

Miroslav Turiyski delves into the topics related to the problem defined in relation to the specifics of the research, with the focus remaining on the object, the subject, the goal and the tasks. Reviewing the melodic-harmonic system for defining the performance process, the doctoral student makes generalizing correct conclusions.

The conclusion presents a successful summary of the creative achievements in the dissertation, and the main suggestions are presented succinctly and correctly. The process of making music is a function of creative factors that must present music as inspiration. This implies studying these factors for years, and after studying them, it is understood that only a fraction of their essence is known. The author writes:

*"The aim of the work is to confirm the hypothesis that the freedom to improvise is directly dependent on the mentioned factors, which are subject of research. In general, it can be said that it is inversely proportional to the complexity of the composition and arrangement and to the size of the ensemble"*.

The conducted analyzes help to draw conclusions about the relationships that exist between improvisation and the considered factors. There is a dependence of the freedom of improvisation on the stylistic features of the composition, the arrangement and the lineup of musicians to shape the overall concept of the piece.

The set conditions for performance are in line with the thesis that improvisation in a musical play appears as a means of inspiration. This statement evokes respect and admiration. The scale of the possible relationships between these components, the prospects for their evolution, the depth and significance of the possible achievements for the future can be impressive.

The dissertation provides a well-balanced analysis of the main varieties of the contemporary jazz performance. The author makes true and accurate assessments of trends and characteristics of these varieties. He outlines problems and ways to solve them and makes correct presentation of the methods for creating a jazz composition. Problems and ways to solve them have been outlined.

In the main contributions, in the form of five separate positions, the author's claims are formulated. An analysis has been made of the new techniques used in the creation of jazz music. Formulated contributions include synthesized summaries of jazz music theory that can serve as supporting literature in teaching jazz improvisation.

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The concerts held enrich the cultural and creative heritage. The analysis of important elements of the practical side of jazz improvisation provide directions for educational practices. It proves that interaction is important in the jazz ensemble, thus revealing the place of the performers in the building jazz improvisation.

In the dissertation, the analysis is consistent, and in the conclusion, a successful summary of the creative achievements in the dissertation is made, with the main suggestions being correctly deduced. The study of the musical characteristics has a practical focus, using the personal empirical experience.

There is a well-formulated aim and objectives of the dissertation, which ensure promising and valuable research. The main thesis stated by the author at the beginning of his research has significant scientific potential. The listed contributions sufficiently reflect the achievements of the dissertation.

Taking into account the above arguments, I consider that Miroslav Turiyski fully meets the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art under the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, and I propose to the respected scientific jury to award it to him.

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