

OPINION

by Prof Lozanka Peycheva, D.A.

on the dissertation work of

Nikolay Stefanov Gurbanov,

doctoral student at the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof. Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv

Topic: **The suites of Kosta Kolev for orchestra of Bulgarian folk instruments**

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Academic supervisor: Prof Kostadin Buradzhiev, PhD

The dissertation presented for defense develops a challenging and promising topic for the compositional techniques of Kosta Kolev and his contributions to the development of the orchestra of Bulgarian folk instruments, also called: "folk orchestra", "orchestra of reconstructed local instruments", "folk philharmonic" (Donna Buchanan). Kosta Kolev is an original highly productive artist with inspiring significance for the evolution of the Bulgarian folk music, named "an era in the development of instrumental folk music" (Milcho Vassilev). In Nikolay Gurbanov's reading, Kosta Kolev is aptly characterized as an "emblematic figure", a "reformer", "one of the founders and at the same time a revolutionary in the building of the orchestra of folk instruments in a constructive and artistic aspect".

The dissertation work unfolds on a total of 233 pages in a well-considered structure including introduction, three chapters, conclusion, contributions, bibliography and five appendices.

The Introduction precisely and clearly formulates the motives for choosing the researched topic, the object and the subject of the research, the purpose and tasks, as well as the methods used.

In the **first chapter**, the subject of observation are: the personality and the work of Kosta Kolev; his activity in the folk song ensemble as part of the history of the Orchestra of Folk Instruments in Bulgaria; some specifics of the genre "suite" and the place of orchestral suites in the work of Kosta Kolev.

The literary sources researched by the doctoral student are listed in the form of citations and present: biographical data, published works of the composer, information about the Folk Song Ensemble at the Bulgarian Radio, information and assessments about the creative activity of Kosta Kolev. The detailed biographical line of Kosta Kolev highlights the main moments in his professional development.

At the end of the first chapter, the candidate offers the necessary discussion and justification of his understanding of these works by Kosta Kolev, which "bear the genre definition and the name 'suite'." Recognizing that the works to which the analytical attention is directed are not unquestionably and irrelevantly qualified as suites (and can be associated with other genre categories - for example

"medley"), the author notes that in this case the genre name "suite" is not some absolute quality and makes the important stipulation that "Kosta Kolev's suites have their own specifics, which do not fit mechanically into the proposed definitions of a suite." It is important to emphasize that this distinctive feature is in the convergence and soldering between oral and written, between *folk* and *art* (this is what some interviewees share with Gurbanov say: "he combined the European tradition with the Bulgarian"; "from a folk music orchestra (...) he made a mini-symphony orchestra"). In many places in the dissertation it is clearly and reasonably said and shown that the two styles work together, innovating each other. On the one hand, Kosta Kolev preserves the strophic nature of the folk song inherent in the oral folk music, the motives of the instrumental-dance source and the variability as the main engine of the form; which, on the other hand, combines with artistic factors, such as modal-tonal dramaturgy and reprise through which thematic unity is sought in order to transform the oral open traditional form (folk) into a written closed ("finished") composition (art). This feature of the compositional forms - as an expression of contrasting unity, crossing different styles in one text, convergence in the closest way and complementary balance between folk and art - for Gurbanov is one of the reasons why "suites" deserve special analytical attention. The doctoral student appropriately highlights another important feature in the studied works: along with the deep connection between the stylistic layers of folk and art, which is the lifeblood of K. Kolev's works, they develop regionally specific thematic material from all folklore areas of Bulgaria and this is indicated by the candidate among the main reasons for his research interest in specific works of Kosta Kolev. The chapter ends with a convincing classification of K. Kolev's suites according to the genre specifics of the melodic material, in which two types are clearly distinguished: instrumental-dance suites (based mainly on instrumental phrases (motives), intended to be "music to music-dance performances") and instrumental-song suites (built on themes from folk songs, "performed as a separate concert unit"), analyzed in detail in the next two chapters of the dissertation.

At the beginning of the **second chapter**, the doctoral student makes important stipulations and clarifications about the theoretical basis and terminology used in the structural and harmonic analysis of the selected works, which is necessary "so as not to create ambiguity or terminological chaos". Without being exhaustive, Gurbanov is looking for a range of terms that "can fully cover the phenomena of original music on a folklore basis" and draws on various analytical terms that have been adopted for the composer's work to apply to Kosta Kolev's suites: modal mobility, modal modulation, modal mutation, modal comparison, etc.

The analytical observations are focused on several works by Kosta Kolev (*Pleven Suite*, *Haskovo Suite*, *Chirpan Suite*, *Old Dobrich Suite*, *Shopska Suite*, *Pirin Suite*), defined by the candidate as "suites of instrumental-dance type". The dissertation author has chosen his own path of detailed study of the shaping mechanism in the selected samples. Here he closes the analysis in the circle of the form. These works are interpreted in the usual way for formal analysis - through a strong emphasis on detailed description and understanding of topics; coverage of modal dramaturgy; emphasis on the

independent expressive value of harmonization and the diversity of specific harmonic ideas; differentiation of texture plans; outlining the contours and the specific organization of the musical form, which is based on the phrase (*knee*) as a structural unit; the special solutions of the cadenza moments, etc.

Furthermore, after the specific stylistic analyses that outline the compositional features of the discussed works, Gurbanov summarizes his observations and draws valuable conclusions about the structural richness and paradigmatic organization of K. Kolev's compositional style.

In the **third chapter**, the doctoral candidate continues the formalistic analysis, focusing his efforts on Kolev's "instrumental-song type" suites. Gurbanov divides them in two and separates them into two groups, according to the way in which the works are constructed in terms of texture.

Following this working principle of division, the doctoral student derives repetitive structural schemes in the analyzed works from the first group ("Strandzha Suite", "Suite of Bulgarian folk melodies", "Thracian melodies and rhythms") and determines their stylistic marking by highlighting various important factors in their compositional structuring: vividness of the melodic plan, which "plays a significant role in the organization of musical time"; significant prominence of harmonic language; characteristic dramaturgic organization in the structural relations, etc.

In the course of the specific structural analysis of the works from the second group ("Pazardzhik Suite" (for orchestra of folk instruments), "Kotlenska Suite", Suite "Buenek" / "Buenetsi", "Rhodope Suite", "Pazardzhik Suite" (for soloist, choir and orchestra.), "Transka Suite", "Dobrudzha harvest suite") are indicated individual elements and compositional techniques, which through active interpenetration participate in the construction of the "clear and orderly exposition" of the Kolev's scores.

The **conclusion** precisely and rightly notes that in its entirety Kosta Kolev's work receives wide stylistic validity in Bulgaria and reaches a quality value that situates it as a kind of foundation on which generations of Bulgarian composers and arrangers step, who authorize and develop the Bulgarian folk music. creating innumerable works for orchestra of Bulgarian folk instruments and a variety of original new musical styles.

Four publications are mentioned on the topic of the dissertation, which reflect different aspects of the issues developed in the dissertation.

The abstract adequately reflects the structure and content of the dissertation and presents it in a reduced form.

The contributions mentioned by the author include several significant scientific results obtained by the doctoral student. In their unity, they outline the most significant contribution of Nikolai Gurbanov - the introduction of personal touches in the analysis and classification of the suites of Kosta Kolev, which he interprets. This specific view guarantees the originality and relevance of the research and is an undoubted contribution of the dissertation work.

The appendices to the dissertation enrich the research, and the fourth appendix reveals and

clarifies in another way the true significance of Kosta-Kolev's work and the attitude of the recipients to the Kosta Kolev phenomenon, which leaves deep traces in the memory of his colleagues, friends and audience.

CONCLUSION

The above leads to the conclusion that the dissertation is a comprehensive research that contributes to the requirements and criteria of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation, which is why I hereby give positive opinion for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor", in professional field 8.3. Music and dance art, Doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art, to Nikolay Stefanov Gurbanov.

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