
REVIEWS

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*Interdisciplinary Approach to Music:
Listening, Performing, Composing*
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The monographic study entitled *Interdisciplinary Approach to Music: Listening, Performing, Composing*¹ is the result of years of close cooperation between the two musicologists – Tijana Popović Mladjenović Ph.D. and Ivana Perković Ph.D. and a music psychologist – Blanka Bogunović

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¹ Tijana Popović Mladjenović, Blanka Bogunović, and Ivana Perković: *Interdisciplinary Approach to Music: Listening, Performing, Composing*, Belgrade, Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, 2014.

Ph.D. – or, to be more precise, this book is a result of an ‘alliance’ of two academic disciplines – musicology and the psychology of music – in the fields of emotion, cognition, and imagery in listening, performing, and composing music.

Interdisciplinarity, understood as the most specific form of a scientific approach which integrates different types of knowledge from the (likewise) various (traditional) academic disciplines, is a dominant mode of academic reflection by all three authors during the past decade of their scientific and wider professional work. All started in 2008, when the Conference of Interdisciplinary Musicology (CIM) was held.

The theme of the mentioned conference was based on the idea of Richard Parncutt, four years earlier, who ‘invited’ interdisciplinary contributions that have at least two authors, who should preferably represent two of the following three groups: the humanities, sciences, and practically oriented disciplines. At that point, three authors started with several research projects in a chain, conceptualizing them according to three main activities in music: listening, performing, and composing, based on an interdisciplinary musicological method and analytical interpretative approach, and an empirical qualitative

research methodology of social sciences, here, psychology. They presented their research at three CIM conferences, at the 11th International Conference of the Department of Musicology, Faculty of Music in Belgrade, and the National Conference of the Psychological Association of Serbia, as well. They also published several articles in international journals. As a logical continuation of these activities, the idea emerged to integrate all their research and theoretical outcomes into a book which could be interesting to students of music and psychology, to the national and international scientific and music community, especially because of the fact that a Serbian performer and composers were included in their research, which provides an extra contribution, in a sense, of socio-cultural idiosyncrasies.

This book is a rare attempt to join musicology and psychology together in a common task aimed at integrating strengths in order to reach a deeper understanding of the musical phenomenon. In the authors' opinion, working on it also required a great deal of flexibility and open-mindedness, because in addition to individual differences in thinking, writing styles and personal scientific and music experiences, they had to deal with differences stemming from the discourses of their disciplines, terminology, and research methods. The overlapping of two disciplines – the humanities and social sciences – musicology and psychology, offered the opportunity to build new knowledge and give more than “just a sequence of separate pieces of knowledge” of a complex and an ever enchantingly intriguing musical phenomenon.

Such a broadly defined goal determined the very conception of the mono-

graphic study *Interdisciplinary Approach to Music: Listening, Performing, Composing*. Namely, the book is divided into five chapters: **Prelude** – gives an introduction to the interdisciplinary in the studies of musical phenomena; **Listening** – presents research on listening to music that deals with the musical structure and emotional response to W.A. Mozart's *Phantasie in C minor, K. 457*; **Performing** – explains the levels of communication during the live performance of Berio's *Sequenza VI for Viola Solo*, as well as the issue of the relation between musical structure and expressive body movements; **Composing** – analyses compositional practices of contemporary Serbian composers in the light of the dichotomy Nature versus Culture and **Postlude** – gives an integration of conceptual and empirical findings presented in the previous chapters, placing emphasis on common concepts – emotion, cognition, and imagery in listening, performing, and composing. The book contains ten Appendices with questionnaires and the protocol which were used in the research procedures, examples of music segmentation analysis of W.A. Mozart's *Phantasie in C minor, K. 457* and excerpts from the macro-formal plan of Berio's *Sequenza VI for Viola Solo*, as well as the biography of Dejan Mladjenović, viola performer, short biographies of eleven Serbian composers who participated in the authors' research, and notes on the book's authors. A DVD is attached to the back cover of the book, and it contains audio and video music examples, as well as scores of the musical pieces of the mentioned composers.

In the first chapter, two authors Popović Mladjenović and Bogunović focus on “Interdisciplinarity in the Studies of

Musical Phenomena” pointing to theoretical models and different interpretations of interdisciplinarity in general. Discussing the differences between the “general interdisciplinarians” and the “integration interdisciplinarians”, the authors define their position and emphasize the importance of this second group of scientists/researchers, while stressing the need to develop new approaches that will not insist on inter-disciplinary competition and ‘laying claims to’ dealing with certain musical phenomenon, but strive to integrate their already existing knowledge and achievements. They, as “integrationist interdisciplinarians”, believe that integration should be the goal of interdisciplinary work because integration addresses the challenge of complexity. An interdisciplinary study draws on existing disciplinary knowledge transcending it *via* integration, freely borrows methods from the disciplines when appropriate, and seeks to produce new knowledge and to accomplish this *via* the process of integration. In other words, the authors opt for the “reduction of the semantic ambiguity of the term interdisciplinarity and direct the research towards cognitive psychology which shows that the integration is natural and attainable”. They search for the foundations and offer the answers regarding the “orchestrated concept of musicology”, at the same time pointing to (possible) new research horizons of musical thinking. Starting from this position, the authors concentrate on musicology as an area of musical exploration that functions as a platform for an “old new” goal, and it reads: “‘to test’ the validity of psycho-musicological hypotheses about how man thinks musically”. In the wake of this, the authors analyse the emotional response (*Listening*), levels of com-

munication through music (*Performing*) and offer a lively discussion on compositional concepts and manuscripts established through the anthropological axis: nature versus culture (*Composing*).

In the second chapter – *Listening*, whose subtitle is “Musical Structure and Emotional Response: W.A. Mozart’s Phantasie in C minor, K. 475” – the point of the authors’ departure was the question: “What do we enjoy in our apprehension of musical structure?” or “What is it that we enjoy while listening to the formal and sensual properties of absolute music unfolding in our listening space?” To be more precise, the authors were interested in how purely musical events build musical “plots”, gain musical expressiveness and the status of fictional narrative. Following this said interest, the authors took into account: the contour theory of musical expressiveness, based on the analogy between musical expressiveness and human expression. They also took into account the opinion that music is a kind of pure live motion which can be realized in thoughts, that musical thinking generates existence, and that hearing music means hearing an emotion, as well as the understanding of music as the image of an inner life flow, as the train of consciousness, or primarily the stream of the unconscious, thus *the motion and emotion* are also inseparably linked in music and by music. In the given context, the authors believe that “the pillars of musical structure and structural organisation have an extremely important role in the production of musical expressiveness, connection to human expression, musical motion related to human emotion”. In other words, they grow into pillars of the meaning, substance and interpretation of music.

The special aspect of the research presented in this chapter is that the authors chose to investigate the emotional response related to the musical structure and segmentation of music unfolding in time, considering the musical piece as a whole – Mozart’s *Phantasie* in C minor K.475, for piano. This musical piece was chosen due to the specific aspects of musical form and harmony. The research had two parts: the musical-analytical and the psychological. The first part consists of an original and relatively new, in terms of the available sources, detailed formal analysis of the micro-syntactic and macro-syntactic levels of Mozart’s *Phantasie*, relative to/compared with the second one – the empirical results of continuous self-reported data concerning segmentation and the structural points of gravity. The special task of the formal analysis was to discover which musical feature assumes the role of the sign of recognition of the structure at a given moment, and thus becomes the pillar of structural organization, its ‘point of gravity’ in the unfolding of musical events. After that, the researchers asked: where is the key point of the experienced musical expression? Is the emotional process unfolding in the course of listening to the function of the pillars of musical structure, or is it dependent upon the specific personality characteristics and experience of the listener? By way of conclusion, the authors pointed out that “the key point of musical expression is founded on the musical structure and the pillars of structural organization, and these are, in the first place, the determinants of musical experience, especially in the case of skilled listeners. A further point is that the musical expression of a piece is a matter of the listener’s individual perspective

and specific emotional meaning that the music induces, as well as metacognitive elaboration, personal characteristics, (emotional) intelligence and life experiences”.

The next, third chapter is divided into two subsections, which present different levels of musical communication – musical, expressional, cognitive, affective and kinaesthetic, with regard to the live performance of Luciano Berio’s *Sequenza VI for Viola Solo* by the eminent Serbian viola player, Dejan Mladjenović. In particular, the results of the first segment of research (given in the section entitled “Levels of Communication: Theatrical Expressivity of Berio’s *Sequenza VI* for Viola Solo”) indicate the levels of communication that occur between the current ‘happenings on stage’ – live performing, i.e. between the stage expressiveness of the performers and the group of respondents. Live performance in the social context is important for two reasons: on the one hand, it expresses fully the specifically theatrical ideas and expressivity of the character, action and narrative of *Sequenza VI*, and, on the other hand, it enables several layers of communication, deriving from the model of the communicational path in the following tetrad: composer/*Sequenza VI* – viola – performer – listeners. The reason why the authors chose a contemporary piece is that they wanted to avoid a pre-existence in listening apprehension of the well-known styles of music. Besides, it was an opportunity, as they said, to “give a chance” to a piece of music that is rarely performed in the local (Serbian) environment.

In this research, the authors’ theoretical framework was based on music communication models in the field of a (social) psychology of music, and on a musicologi-

cal concept of musical signification and meaning in music. Put in other words, “the psychological approach was directed towards the personal perception and/or experience induced or triggered by music in a social context, as well as to understanding the roles of expression in the compositional and performing processes”, while musicological thinking was focused on “the theoretical frameworks aimed at understanding how music can embody, express, arouse or otherwise signify emotional states”.

In the research, the authors’ included the live viola performance of a contemporary music piece in front of a selected audience and it was followed by the self-reported responses from the performer himself (an interview with the violist Dejan Mladjenović), and the group of listeners on the musical, cognitive, expressional and kinaesthetic levels of their experiences (questionnaires). In this sense, the results set forth within the first segment of the third section suggest qualitative levels of communication and reveal the content, scope and directions of the interactions between Berio’s *Sequenza VI* – viola – performer – listeners (with special regard to performer- and listener-related factors of communication, e.g. physical reactions, affective responses, cognitive comprehension and narrative).

The second segment of the research elaborated within the third chapter – “Embodied Meaning: Musical Structure and Expressive Body Movements”, focuses on the non-verbal communication and embodied meaning of musical structure. The research method used in this study was empirical and quantitative. The research *aims* were to observe and analyse the performer’s movements as a “real time” event, re-

corded on video camera, in terms of the intensity and frequency of movement, gesture and mime, to relate them to the sections of the musical score, as well as to explore the specific keys/cues of embodied meaning in different sections of the musical structure that contribute to the expressivity of performance as a tool of transferring meaning and emotional density. In other words, this segment of the ‘performing chapter’ indicates the places of ‘correspondence’ between the expressiveness of moves/gestures of the performer and listeners, and the musical structure of the piece itself.

The fourth chapter of the monographic study, with the subtitle: “Nature versus Culture: Compositional Practices of Contemporary Serbian Composers” focuses on the musical activity – composing – which together with the previous two are inextricably linked with the processes of music thinking. In this regard, the authors explore the positions and processes of the composer – a topic that is densely interwoven with the still provocative questions of the origin of music and the reason for its existence – considering that their position is “anchored” in the “space between nature and culture”. Aiming to present in the best possible way the creative processes of composing and the mechanisms that lie behind them, the authors demonstrated a wide range of possible impacts on the aforementioned processes.

These influences range, in the opinion of three authors, from a *microsystem* – the composer’s intentions, through a *mezzo system* (social and psychological environment), towards widely set *macro-systems* such as nature and/or culture. The conclusions that were reached in this chapter stem

from responses by eleven Serbian composers (Ivan Brkljačić, Zoran Erić, Srdjan Hofman, Rajko Maksimović, Tatjana Milošević, Marko Nikodijević, Vladan Radovanović, Svetlana Savić, Ivana Stefanović, Vladimir Tošić and Miloš Zatkalik) about their own musical creation, processes, states and positions in the space between nature and culture, i.e. personal understanding of emotional, cognitive, creative and imaginary processes, and the connection of the said processes to the musical flow and the musical structure, and so in relation to the socio-cultural context.

In the last chapter of the monographic study, *Postlude*, and more specifically, in the subtitle “Emotion, Cognition and Imagery in: Listening, Performing, Composing”, the authors weave a fine web of conclusions derived from the research work presented in the previous chapters, emphasizing that it was in the very interdisciplinary research of emotion, cognition and creative imagination and their relations with the ways of structuring and articulating the musical flow, and with respect to the socio-cultural context, that a holistic approach was needed to describe and fully encompass the form of joint musical processes and experiences from all three musical activities – listening, performing and composing.

The monographic study *Interdisciplinary Approach to Music: Listening, Performing, Composing* not only deepens our understanding of the process of listening to a musical piece in its entirety, the live per-

formance of music and composing of music, but also provides a new integrative interdisciplinary approach to musicology and psychology of music by reviewing the relevant theoretical models and applying proven methods from both disciplines. In that respect, this publication should stimulate further discussion about what seems to be “the key issue, not only a methodological, but also a political issue, in contemporary research of music: the level [...] of integration of disciplinary differences, without the ‘deletion’ of [their] individual potentials”. In other words, this book is a testimony of providing much more than a “sequence of separate parts of comprehending the complex and always intriguing phenomenon of music”.

Since it is published in English, the monographic study *Interdisciplinary Approach to Music: Listening, Performing, Composing*, and since it is epistemologically and analytically extremely rich, seems particularly suitable for presentation to the international scientific community. It is written in clear and understandable language, making it also accessible to a large number of readers among the wider interested public and within the very narrow professional audience. This is an example of the successful integration of the humanistic and social science approaches in the study of musical phenomena which significantly contributes to the development of the interdisciplinary research model in music and its surroundings.

Translated by Nataša Živković