Art Music like a New Sound Sensuousness

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Abstract: The text is devoted to a current for the contemporaneity creative problem – the search for a new aesthetic and a new musical language in the space of Art Music. In the broader context of contemporaneity are studied diverse compositional approaches in Bulgarian music after 1950’s that creatively discourse Musical Avant-gardes and its hypostases as the attention is especially focused on two composer’s visions, which in different ways originally and radically comment on Musical Avant-gardes by building up a new sound sensuousness: the creative work of Dimiter Christoff (born 1933) and Gheorghi Arnaudov (born 1957). For Dimiter Christoff the substance of his music are sound archetypes derived from archaic folkloric layers (e.g. Shoppe diaphony). Already in the 1960’s the composer has defined this substance by the term “objective material”. The monodic deployment of sound archetypes creates a sound space of an unreal, suggestive imaginary multi-linearity. This method of composing as an aesthetic and a musical language is a vital and constructive path especially for the music of composers belonging to musical cultures with a preserved folkloric tradition until the 20th century. In a series of works of Gheorghi Arnaudov (born 1957) composer’s vision is directed towards attaining a new aesthetic of pure music (Adorno), aestheticizing renaissance sound purity. By using various techniques (including also techniques legitimizing the language of Musical Avant-garde) and their substance rethinking is achieved a new music-sensuous semantic field. The search for a new sound sensuousness may be regarded as a creative radicalism in the thinking about Contemporary Music as Musica Nova, opening perspective horizons for Art Music.

The text is devoted to a current, for the contemporaneity, creative problem – the search for a new aesthetic and musical language in the space of Art Music. It’s also related to my work on the formulation and content of the stylistic category new (contemporary) in Bulgarian music.¹

The Concept New Music in Bulgarian Musicology

Over the last decade in Bulgarian musicology has been observed an increasing interest for a new historical interpretation of Bulgarian art music. As a basic discourse, for the 20th century has been brought out the term/ concept modern. The reasons for this are primarily related to new aesthetical and musicological interpretations in the examination of individual works and artists in a broad culturological and philosopho-aesthetical context, as well as in terms of the used musical language. The modernity is a serious argument through the means of which is historically brought out the equal inscription of the Bulgarian art music in the European music contemporaneity as aesthetics as well as a musical language.² Thus, if we go further back, in the decades before World War II, in the 1920s and 1930s, the debate for Bulgarian national style was actually a debate on the modernity of Bulgarian music and musical culture. Even the members of the society Contemporary Music (established in 1933), i.e. the Bulgarian classical composers, were aware of their new strategic mission and have entered the Bulgarian music and musical culture in the context of 20th century Europe. In the decades after World War II, the coexistence of artists from different generations was determining the existence of different stylistic directions and trends in Bulgaria. On one hand, was established the folkloro-romantic pathos, in the period of totalitarian rule (1944–1989) expressing the pathos of the ideologeme socialist realism. On the other hand however, are observed phenomenas, which could be defined as avant-garde in terms of compositional ideas and the used radical means of creative expression, typical of the entire 20th century – atonalism, dodecaphony, serial and modal principles of construction of musical material, aleatory and sonorism, polystylism, collage and so on.

I will emphasize that the concept New Music (Neue Music, Musique Contemporaine) in the terminological apparatus, associated with the Bulgarian composers’ creative work, is laden
with different connotations (meanings). On one hand, this is the music created here and now; on the other, contemporary means new (= news) and as such it legitimizes new original compositional projections, which attach to it new informational, and in some cases, value meanings.

Characteristic feature of such identification is the music language used as an expression of new meanings. In this discourse, in the Bulgarian music, the stylistic category new (contemporary) may be formulated as: music of our time that expresses its spirit and ideas through a corresponding musical language and compositional techniques based on and conceptualized in terms of the search for an individual compositional signature that involves learning from the experience of the past and the present in the wide context of the national and the international music tradition of 20th and 21st centuries. 

**New Music and Modernity as Music-cultural Explosions**

Outlined are two ways of examining the new Bulgarian music. Very often in Bulgarian musicology and music critic, especially in the period 1950s – 1980s, the talk about Bulgarian avant-garde music as an expression of modernity, as well as the argumentation of the stylistic category new, is analogous to the processes in Western European music – it’s assessed as synchronicity or retardation. Grounds for bringing out of such synchronicity are associated with the compositional position and the creative work of Dimitar Nenov, as early as 1930s. Nenov studied music in Dresden Conservatoire, Germany; specializing piano with Egon Petri in Zakopane, Poland; in 1932 he graduated in music in Bologna, Italy. His music expresses his original vision of the creative process, which harmoniously combined his personality with the contemporary ideas and the Bulgarian national tradition. His music served as a model to many Bulgarian composers of the next generations, willing to start new trends in Bulgarian art music. But the two composers – Konstantin Iliev (1924–1988) and Lazar Nikolov (1922–2005), first in Bulgaria associated themselves with processes parallel to the Western European avant-garde music after World War II. Konstantin Iliev graduated from the State Academy of Music in Sofia, in 1946 majoring in composition under Professor Pancho Vladigerov, conducting under Professor Marin Goleminov and violin under Professor Vladimir Avramov. In 1946 – 1947 he specialized conducting at the Prague Music Academy under Professor V. Talih, composition under Y. Ridki, and attended quadritone composition classes given by Professor Alois Haba. Lazar Nikolov graduated from the State Academy of Music in Sofia, majoring in piano and composition under Professor Dimitar Nenov (1946) and Professor Pancho Vladigerov (1947). Konstantin Iliev and Lazar Nikolov situated the ideas of Bulgarian music in the context of the thinking of it as new and the new music became music-cultural fact in Bulgaria.

The Concerto for String Orchestra by Lazar Nikolov (1949-1951, premiered in 1951) and the Symphony #2 for wind instruments by Konstantin Iliev (1951, premiered in 1954) for Bulgarian music may be defined as a turning point, as new trends, as music-cultural explosion, compared to the tradition (using Gianni Vatimo’s wording). After the discussion of Konstantin Iliev’s symphony, it was officially branded as formalistic. Ever since the 1950s until now, for these works have been talked about (with a good reason) as for the avant-garde (new value attitudes), as well as for the artistic-aesthetical change. At the same time has been marked the beginning of the innovative chamber interpretation of the symphonic genres, which will become a typical trend in the 1960s (brought out are dodecaphonic, serial and modal principles). For good reasons, all these new trends can be identified as the beginning of the Post-War Bulgarian music avant-garde, which was developing in parallel with similar searches in other European countries of the so called “socialist camp” (e.g. the Polish music avant-garde after the mid 1950s, the Russian – since the early 1960s).

Here in I argue the thesis of the actuality of art, related to the existence of parallel processes, which I call hovering ideas. They simultaneously affiliate artists from different nationalities with the same values, without communication and exchange of information between them. Without going in detail of this very interesting and uncoincidentally widely discussed in the broader context, we can argue by comparing it to central European processes.
humanitarian context by philosophers and culturologists phenomenon, as an illustration of this thesis I will cite three eloquent enough examples:

The first example I call *extramural dialogue* between the Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki and the Bulgarian composer Dimiter Christov (b. 1933). Both composers are contemporaries (both born in 1933) from different nationalities, from countries of similar political fate. Their adherence to contemporary music and their individual searches were stated at the same time – in the 1950s – 1960s. In his last book "Fundamental Presuppositions in the Imagination of the Composer. As Related to the Situation of the Early 21st Century" Dimitri Christoff quoted an interview with Penderecki, from which it becomes clear that for both of them the 1960s were a period of revolutionary thinking, rejection of the tradition, a new beginning from scratch, a search for new means of expression, new approaches to form and new sonorities.

The second example relates to the *Concerto for String Orchestra* by Lazar Nikolov premiered in 1951 in Rousse. Lazar Nikolov’s researcher, Angelina Petrova, in her monograph devoted to the composer states that for the composer the work is a *transient product*, which catches (captures), the transition from a traditional to a new language. Although not so noisy (or spectacular), as the booted premier of Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Kreuzspiel* (in 1951), for the new Bulgarian music, the response of the performance had the same symbolic meaning.

The third one also concerns Lazar Nikolov and his compositional techniques. In his monograph devoted to the composer, Konstantin Iliev writes that Lazar Nikolov has reached absolutely on his own to the introduced by him new techniques (as early as in the polytonal *Concerto for String Orchestra*), and defines as irrelevant any analogies with works by other European artists. Angelina Petrova examines Lazar Nikolov’s 12-tone technique as a particular one – it passes through different stages from free atonalism, through 12-tone fields to strict writing close to the serialism. For the composer the 12-tone way of thinking brings in clarity. Each ton has its own sound and meaningful substance – a tone repetition is permitted only when it’s a part of another complex/row and is in adjacent octave (Lazar Nikolov). Lazar Nikolov’s 12-tone aesthetic is preceded by the postulate – art without folklore. Without knowing of the ideas of Pierre Boulez, he reaches style purity in a radical musical language.

In the 1960s to the so called *avant-gardists’* group were affiliated Vassil Kazandjiev (1934) and Ivan Spassov (1934-1996, a student of Kazimir Serotski in Warsaw), Georgi Tutev (1924-1994) and Simeon Pironkoff (1927-2000), who actively attended the European forums for contemporary music. In contrast with Lazar Nikolov and Konstantin Iliev, most Bulgarian composers, and their younger colleagues, since the beginning of their creative path have joined the characteristic for the new music in Eastern Europe trend of increased interest in folklore. The Bulgarian folk music became a creative resource for the development of contemporary musical language.

The following are several distinct examples. In Vassil Kazandjiev’s case the folklore produces a strong impact on his composition techniques, choice of new vocabulary, establishment of a new harmonic system (Milena Bozhikova)10. Stefan Dragostinov (1949) in his *Politempy Series* is looking for new genre forms. His attitude towards the folklore sound reveals his individual approach towards avant-garde and its Bulgarian manifestations. His music presents a synthesis of folk, traditional and avant-garde art (Angelina Petrova). This synthesis can be traced back to other works of Dragostinov’s from the 1980s, like *Choral de Christal* (1987) and in the project *The Key to the Mystery* (12th CDs, produced after 1994) and in *Big Romantic Sonata* for solo clarinet and silent piano (resonance pedal – 2001). In Roussi Tarmakov’s *Rustic Music* the genre interpretation is determined by the modal variety of the texture. In Bojidar Spassov the poly-tempi is characteristic idea, related to the antiphon folk singing.

**The Avant-garde as a Metaphor for a New Sound Space**

It can be concluded that in Bulgarian music the concept *avant-garde* has been used more often metaphorically, as an exponent, as I mentioned earlier, of phenomenas that are in synchronicity with time, a new musical language, a new philosophy and the corresponding with
it *new aesthetics*. All these show not only stylistic attitudes, but also individual approaches to the *ideas of new music*. Therefore, defining the approaches through the process of analogy with Western models does not reveal the specific nature of the phenomena in Bulgarian music. The eloquent example is Lazar Nikolov’s musical language. The attitude towards an individual interpretation of the European avant-garde is characteristic also for the following decades, which defines the freedom of choice in terms of musical language, for the already mentioned artists, as well as for the younger generations.

For Vladimir Pantchev (b. 1948), whom I have examined especially, the attitude towards the means of expression and the music compositional techniques such as *serialism, atonality, sonorism, heterophony* etc are primarily a way of thinking. Already in his works written in Bulgaria in 1980s (since 1991 he lives and works successfully as a composer in Vienna) have been created search spaces in the field of *new music* (in Vladimir Pantchev’s own words). The folk modalities and sound complexes for him are structure formative, they define creative attitude towards the folklore and the inclination towards the verticality (the heterophony) achieved by simultaneous implementation of several versions of the same folk melody (a similar technique can be seen in the works of György Ligeti for example).\(^\text{12}\)

In aesthetical and music-technological context, for composers of the 1950s–1960s as well as for the subsequent generations of Bulgarian artists, the new music and its language are primarily associated with the new thinking about music, about a *new sound space*. This is an area of ideas and particular composer’s implementations; their specific examination shows genuine response of the approaches and music-technological methods, which are perceived as modern (current). The organized forums for new music as the *International Festival Musica Nova – Sofia* (1993–2002) and the International Festival for piano music *ppIANISSIMO* (after 1998),\(^\text{13}\) the concerts, included in the international festival *March Music Day*, the days for new music *Sound and Relation – Sofia, AmBul Festival of American and Bulgarian Music* and other individual projects, as well as some concerts organized in recent years by the *Union of Bulgarian Composers* with works by contemporary Bulgarian and foreign composers are primarily an expression of the idea for a new sound space. Here must be mentioned the names of Dimitar Christoff (b. 1933), Vassil Kazandjieiev (b. 1934), who in 2009 celebrated his 80th anniversary and has an active creative expression, Georgi Minchev (b. 1939), Artin Poturlian (b. 1943), recently deceased talented Bulgarian composer Julia Tzenova (1948–2010), Stefan Dragostinov (b. 1948), Vladimir Pantchev (b. 1948), Roumen Balyozov (1948), Bojidar Spassov (lives in Germany, b. 1949), Michael Goleminova (b. 1956), Gheorghi Arnaoudov (b. 1957), Yassen Vodenicharov (b. 1964), Dragomir Yossifov (b. 1966), etc. Today, in the beginning of the 21st century, in the composer’s visions and implementations (in the Bulgarian music) could be found characteristic features of the new music such as style and musical language, which I’d formulate ambiguously as universality and even paradoxicality (especially in events of the so-called *Post-Modernism*), as universalness and at the same time uniqueness, as a sound space associated primarily with aesthetics and forms, loaded in meaningful plan with various manifestations and post- and neo-.

**The Concept New Sound Sensuousness**

Here in *new sound sensuousness* is introduced as an aesthetic and music-technological category, which is associated with the construction of a new sound space.

I argue the thesis of *new sound sensuousness* focusing specifically on two different composers’ visions, of two Bulgarian artists who originally and radically responded to *musical avant-garde*.

**The first example.** This related to the creative work of Dimitar Christoff. He is the author of voluminous work in different genres – from operas *A Game* (1978) and *The Goldfish* (1983) and orchestral works, to dozens of chamber opuses\(^\text{14}\). As early as 1960s Dimitar Christoff formulated theoretically his composer’s approach, which he successfully implemented in his music. His position is radical. Christoff has distanced himself from the classico-romantic pathos of socialist-realism and aesthetically associated himself with the *new music*, dissociating
himself from serial technique in a search for new means of expression. It is important to emphasize that unlike most of his Bulgarian colleagues Dimiter Christoff had the opportunity to travel the world and be well informed.\(^{15}\)

Dimiter Christoff’s musical language has been built on sound archetypes, which are the substance of his music (the composer derived them from archaic folk layers, characteristic of Bulgarian folk music – e.g. Shoppe diaphony). Theoretically he formulated this substance with the term \textit{objective material}. He examined it thoroughly in his theoretical writings, making the transformation of the \textit{objective material} in a method of composing. For Dimiter Christoff, this concept is associated with the contemporary (for him) topic of the traditional music from non-European origin and folklore on one hand and the modern compositional techniques on the other. To this concept are dedicated and conducted the seminars \textit{Young Composer’s Workshop} (from 1977 to 1996) in Bulgaria and the Netherlands, with lecturers Dimiter Christoff and Ton de Leuv. Dimiter Christoff has built a comprehensive view of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century music as the \textit{century individual styles} and \textit{individual illuminations in technological plan}. As perspective, for himself, the composer chose the monodic way of thinking.\(^{16}\)

The monody is \textit{objective material}, an initial substance. These are primary structures, which the composer described as “empty form and nothing else”. In aesthetic terms, they can be characterized as forms that are given \textit{a priori} and are born with the archetypes of Jung.\(^{17}\) These are also the key to experiencing and analyzing his music. By this way of thinking (through archetypes) Dimiter Christoff has built his vision of the sound space, which is a space of structured and deployed sound archetypes.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\end{figure}

Dimiter Christoff’s sound line has an exceptional charge, manifesting itself in many different ways. Through its deployment is achieved a sense of vibrating sound energy (the zones of density and dynamic activity), as well as in the zones bordering with sheer transparency. Through a linear process he achieves suggestions for the presence of multi-lineness. This multi-lineness is unreal, imaginary, imitated, as the composer defines it, but it has a strong impact.

The sound energy’s movement can be felt particularly strong in the built \textit{empty} musical structures, which Dimiter Christoff uses (e.g. as gradual ascending and descending whole-tone tone rows). These tone rows show different possible directions of interpretation, concerning the use of the \textit{empty} musical structures and the unlimited number of options for filling them up. In this aspect is also the creation of \textit{free genre forms}, which are so vivid and mobile that may be even theatricalized, metaphorically speaking.

In the deployment of the \textit{objective material} method, any solution is particular, led by experience and intuition, i.e. any solution is unique. The scale and nature of Dimiter Christoff’s decisions require complex (including non-musical) interpretation. Through his score and the built-in freedom of interpretation in it, the composer sets a pattern for the performer, but the
model cannot be repeated, it always supposes some interpreter's variantness. This leads to a particular collaboration between creator and performer, among the creator, the performer and the audience. The composer sets the messages, but provokes the listeners themselves to construct the image of these messages. Experiencing the music, the listeners with their own notion are joining the sound space. Through this method of composition Dimiter Christov does not give completed forms, he constructs forms, which he leaves open.

The monodic deployment of the sound archetypes is building sound space that can be defined as unreal, suggestive imaginary multi-lineness. This method of composing as an aesthetic and musical language is vital and constructive for the music path, especially for artists belonging to musical cultures with preserved until the 20th century folkloric tradition.

### The second example.
This related to the music of Gheorghi Arnaoudov\(^\text{18}\). In a series of his works, his creative vision is directed towards achieving of a new aesthetic of pure music (by Adorno)\(^\text{19}\), a renaissance sound quality. By using various techniques (including techniques legitimizing the musical avant-garde's language) and their substance rethinking has been achieved a new music-sensatory semantic field. "His artistic career started in the beginning of the 1980s. At the same time he did research work in the field of music theory, concrete and electro-acoustic music as well as research in the field of ancient and Far-Eastern music. He is the author of scientific and theoretical articles in music, as well as of publicistic and critical reviews in scientific and musical periodicals, mainly in the sphere of the contemporary arts, the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism, communications in music, musical semiotics and the theory of contemporary music\(^\text{20}\)."

G. Arnaoudov's early opuses and his works up to mid 1980s are experiments, various quests in new music as a way of expression and musical language. The mid 1980s are associated with a peculiar crisis for him – the composer himself says that 1986–1987 are related to silence: this is crisis-reflection, which most likely all artists feel about their 30th anniversary (in the words of Prof. Dimiter Christoff). Coincidently, just a conversation with Dimiter Christoff seems to have deepened this reflection, which has led to discovering of his musical expression. In Ritual I for piano, Gheorghi Arnaoudov uses intensive minimalism (in his own words) – each tone is charge with so much meaning, has its own timbre characteristics. This aesthetic concept is manifested also in some of the new concepts in dance theatre genre – the multimedia project The Sound of Silence (2000). G. Arnaoudov’s symphonic and chamber works focus his interest on the sound as an expression of rich imagery. The turn towards the eternal, for example, is a turn towards ancient Bulgarian love texts from the 12\(^{th}\)–13th century in The Way of the Birds cycle (I, II and III) – three large fragments for soprano and chamber orchestra (1995); Footnote (...) und Isolde/ns Winkfall lassen...) (1991), called also an imaginary interlude to the second act of Tristan and Isolde, based upon the poem A Prayer, from the James Joyce's Pomes Penyeach; The Circle of Rites, based upon an old Sanskrit texts (1993); and Thyepoleo – Orphic mystical (2000) rites for vocal ensemble, with characteristic (antique) wind, string and percussion instruments, created on the basis of authentic instruments, created on the basis of authentic ritual texts from before more than 3000 years. In recent years, the composer wrote a series of works, which are aestheticizing enduring models – e.g. Forgotten songs II for piano (2005) and Forgotten Songs III for soprano and string orchestra (2006), associated with old layers in the Bulgarian folklore.

Unlike Dimiter Christoff, who is building his own recognizable sound sequences/rows, Gheorghi Arnaoudov uses melodic sound concepts, which reincarnate the original. The composer seeks the most delicate possible intervention, apparent only when analyzing the music score, but during the performance there is a sense of amalgamation with the original. At places, the author's involvement remains almost on the limit of audibility. Particularly vivid and interesting this can be illustrated with the composed in 2009 Sound Wrappings I – Mozart Wrappings, for two pianos, Sound Wrappings II – Le Rappel des Rameaux, for solo piano, and Monodies for solo piano.
Figure 2. Gheorghi Arnaoudov. “Le Rappel des Rameaux”.

Le Rappel des Rameaux (2009) has had a rarely good fortune for a contemporary Bulgarian work in the field of Art music, attracting the attention of various performers. In Le Rappel des Rameaux are intertwining past and present, present and past, the idea is embedded in different times. The uniform rhythmic pulsation in both parts (Le Rappel des Oiseaux and Le Rappel des Rameaux) is a musical expression of symmetry in the endless circle of time. The striving, towards the "surreal awareness of intervals and consonance, towards the redefinition of clusters as baroque structures of sounds (in composer’s own words) derive a unified dramaturgical imagery. This imagery is in constant delicate internal transformation, the “packed sounds” are the eternal ideas that are intertwined with time. In some textural areas the feeling is even not for a sound, but for a vibrating reality, in which transparently are incorporated beautifully embroidered tone lines and spots.

Final

For Dimiter Christoff and Gheorghi Arnaoudov the attained new sensuousness is possible path for the future of Art music, despite the different approaches they have used. Their monodic way of thinking is based on sound archetypes. In Dimiter Christoff the objective material, which is derived from the Shoppe diaphony is not only a technological method, but a method of composing, of thinking about music. Thus, the composer actually realizes his idea of the
20th century as the century of national styles and *individual creative illuminations*. In Gheorghi Arnouldov, the turn towards the past is a turn towards the spiritual space in its philosophical sense – as an area of eternity and the dedication of time to it. For him the search for light in music is an expression of some kind of Neo-Renaissance.

The presented two composers’ projects are a convincing artistic argument, which expends the thinking about *Musica Nova* in aesthetic and music-technological perspective, as some kind of alternative of the musical language of the avant-garde and the post-modern aesthetic, primarily with its eclecticism. These creative strategies justify the formulated in this paper thesis for the deliberate search for a *new sound sensuousness* in some composers’ works, as a path on the horizon of the 21st century new music.


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2 See publications from Anda Palieva, Boyanka Arnouldova, Lachezar Karanlakov, Svetlana Neycheva, Maria Kostakeva, Milena Bozhikova, Angelina Petrova, Dragomir Yossifov, etc.


7 *Ibid*, p. 54.

8 *Ibid*.


15 In 1963 he won a UNESCO scholarship. In 1966 was published (in Bulgarian) his book *Western Horizons. Music Travel Notes. FRG, France, Holland, the USA* (Sofia: Muzika 1966). From 1975 to 1979 he was the Secretary General of the UNESCO International Music Council. Published are also his theoretical studies: *Composition Problems in the Fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier by Bach* (Sofia: Muzika 1968); *Composer and Social Consciousness. On the Third


20 http://www.arnaoudov.com/biography.htm