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## REVIEWS

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**ZORICA PREMATE\***

**Prof. Dr. Tijana Popović Mladjenović, Asst. Prof. Dr. Ivana Petković Lozo, Asst. Prof. Dr. Ivana Miladinović Prica, *Diffractions of Berislav Popović's Compositional, Music-Theoretical, Pedagogical, Social and Cultural Creation*. Belgrade: University of Arts, Faculty of Music, Department of Musicology – Serbian Musicological Society, 2022, 678 pp.**

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The collective monograph titled *Diffractions of Berislav Popović's Compositional, Music-Theoretical, Pedagogical, Social and Cultural Creation* is a collection of papers presented at the eponymous conference that took place in Belgrade between 30 November and 2 December 2021, marking what would have been Prof. Popović's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, complemented with several texts about his work and activities that have come out in music and other periodicals over the decades and were selected here as reference readings. One may say that the result is a rich and *diffractionally* oriented (in terms of its viewpoints and analytical and factual accomplishments) collective monograph penned by several renowned musicologists, composers, music theorists, ethnomusicologists, physicists, and historians

from Serbia and abroad. Also, the monograph is furnished with a DVD recording of a concert featuring works by Berislav Popović, titled *Sempre e con tutta la forza*, which took place under the auspices of a scholarly conference, as well as a documentary film, *Berislav Popović: A Lived Counterpoint*, based on memories of Popović evoked by many of his former colleagues and students.

The monograph is practically and transparently organized in two "books", which are symmetrically positioned inside a single volume. The Serbian-language version, which comprises a larger number of contributions and therefore occupies a dominant position in the book, covers a total of 410 pages, while the English-language version (containing the English translations of the most relevant studies published in the Serbian-language part of the book, as well as four texts that were written and are available

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only in English) comprises 268 pages. Apart from a large number of notated music examples, the volume also includes relevant black-and-white and colour photographs.

Berislav Popović (1931–2002) “was one of the most significant music figures in recent Serbian history, a dedicated creator, distinguished professor, music theorist with a highly original *handwriting*, and a prominent carrier of music life in every community [where] he worked” (p. 9). Almost all of the authors included in this book refer precisely to the extraordinary, erudite, “renaissance” personality of Berislav Popović, as well as to the term *diffractions*, borrowed from the title of one of his orchestral works and resignified into the metaphorical title of this scholarly conference and monograph, as well as serving, primarily, as the central axis of his comprehensive compositional-poetic, figural, and theoretical-aesthetic creativity and social activity. Also, the authors of the studies included in the book likewise agree that Popović’s work in composition, painting, theoretical and philosophical thinking formed multiple faces of one and the same creative essence, supporting and permeating one another, developing and announcing themselves to the world through music, painting, and photography, as well as through *Music Form or Meaning in Music*, a unique theoretical-analytical scholarly study and a rare cardinal accomplishment in Serbian theoretical-aesthetic-philosophical thinking on music.

The monograph is divided into several chapters, in line with their main themes and fields of activity. The opening chapter, “*Diffractions of the Compositional Creation*”, is focused on Berislav

Popović’s musical compositions and, apart from a 1986 study by Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman reprinted from the journal *Zvuk* (“*Diffractions... A Sketch of Berislav Popović’s Musical Poetics*”, which, in a way, also served as a model for many of the authors who discussed Popović’s works here), comprises excellent, highly complex studies that are analytically and aesthetically focused chiefly on Popović’s musical as well as visual and theoretical creativity. It is surveyed as a “diffractive beam of unified, synchronized, and interferential currents and fields of thought and energy”, discussed here by the musicologists Neda Nestorović (“Continuum of Flow of Coloured Fields: Of Sound-Visual Art Identity of Berislav Popović”), Milica Lazarević (“Interference of Berislav Popović’s Compositional and Music-Theoretical Thinking”), Ivana Petković Lozo (“À la recherche du temps vécu... *A Universe of Musical and Figurative Space-Time: Medium Tempus and Autoportret* by Berislav Popović”), Marija Simonović (“*Interferences between the Creative Poetics of Berislav Popović and Gaston Bachelard*”), and Ivana Miladinović Prica (“*Signifying Play in A Shadow Play* by Berislav Popović”). The chapter closes with a contribution by one of the most faithful successors and translators of Popović’s theoretical poetics, analytical work, and pedagogy, Miloš Zatkalik (“*Berislav Popović: A Ballad about Lost Tonality*”), reprinted here from the *New Sound* journal of music (2007).

The following chapter (“*Diffractions of the Music-Theoretical Creation*”) is dedicated to Popović’s greatest single contribution to music theory, aesthetics,

and philosophy, *Music Form or Meaning in Music* (Belgrade, 1998). It opens with reviews that were published in musicological journals at the time, penned by Srđan Hofman (“Berislav Popović, Music Form or Meaning in Music”, 1999) and Zorica Premate (“Musical Form: A Model of Energy in Time”, 1999), and continues with an original view of musical form from the perspective of contemporary physics by the composer’s son Marko Popović (“A Narration about Musical Form or Meaning in Music through the Language of Modern Physics”). This is followed by a comparative-analytical survey by Nemanja Sovtić (“Theses on Musical Discourse: A Foucaultian View of Berislav Popović’s Theoretical-analytical Thought”); an essay by Anica Sabo, a close colleague of Popović and follower of his pedagogical and analytical poetics (“The Conception of the Phenomenon of Musical Flow in Berislav Popović’s Theoretical Writings”); and a successful testing of Popović’s theory in ethnomusicological scholarship by Mirjana Zakić (“Aspects of Determining the ‘Structural Focal Point’ / ‘Morphological Dominant’ in Ethnomusicology”).

The monograph continues with a chapter focused on Popović’s work in the institutional and societal sphere: “Diffractions of the Socio-Cultural and Academic-Institutional Engagement”. It includes a study by his grandson, the historian Dimitrije Mladenović, and his colleague Aleksandar Puškaš (“Berislav Popović in the Cultural, Social, and Political Context of His Time”), followed by the contributions of Valentina Radoman (which also offers an excellent critical insight into the past and present of World

Music Day celebrations in Serbia; “Composer Berislav Popović as Chairman of the Yugoslav Organizing Committee for the European Year of Music 1985 Festival”), Ivana Medić (“Constructive Engine of Music: Berislav Popović and the Series Music Today / Musical Modernism of the Third Program of Radio Belgrade”), as well as a valuable (reprinted) analytical article by Dragana Stojanović-Novičić, focused on the author’s many (other) writings (“The Written Word of Berislav Popović – Intellectual-Artistic Credo”, 2006–2007).

The chapter titled “Diffractions of Pedagogical Creativity” features two invaluable insights into Popović’s pedagogical practice and ethics of working with students: “From the Pedagogical Practice of Berislav Popović: Archival Sources on the Teaching of Musical Forms and Styles at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade”) and “The Pedagogical Work of Berislav Popović”, a joint study by Popović’s colleagues at the Faculty Anica Sabo, Ana Stefanović, Ivana Vuksanović, Ivana Ilić, and Sonja Marinković.

The memories of Popović’s contemporaries, divided between the chapters focused on his socio-cultural and academic-pedagogical work, are located at their respective endings, under the titles of “Diffractions of the Imperative Programmes of ‘Can’ and ‘Must’” (including the recollections of Petar Bergamo, Marija Koren Bergamo, Nikola Rackov, Miloje Nikolić, and Dubravka Jovičić) and “The Diffractions of a ‘School Man’” (the recollections of Ana Kotevska, Ivana Stefanović, and Snežana Nikolajević).

The concluding section of this expansive monograph features some addi-

tional studies, which are classified in its title as follows: “Diffractions *avant la lettre*: Berislav Popović’s Native Town in His Early Youth and the Early (Pre)history of Discussing Musical Form in Serbia”. It includes an invaluable study by Milan Milojković, “Berislav Popović and Zaječar’s Musical Life after World War II” and Ivana Perković’s study “On Views of Musical Form in Serbia’s ‘Second 19<sup>th</sup>-century’ (Digitalized) Periodicals”.

The monograph concludes with a short biography of Berislav Popović as well as those of the authors featured in the collection. It is a shame that the authors did not include a list of Popović’s musical compositions (although it would not be a very long list, admittedly), with basic information about their year of composition and performing forces required, or a bibliography of Popović and other authors’ published works, although all of that, with a little additional trouble, may be found within the studies included in the monograph.

Apart from the translations of almost all the studies included in the main chapters of this collective monograph, the English-language part features another four texts that are available only in English: “The Contribution of the Scientific Work of Berislav Popovic to Understanding the Deep Connection between Music and Psyche: Meta-Analysis of Music and Libidinal Flow” by Nada O’Brien; “Form or Meaning. Form and Meaning. Form as Meaning: Reflections on Music Form or Meaning in Music by Berislav Popović” by Miloš Zatkalik (a post-Husserlian discussion of ideas expounded in *Music Form or Meaning in Music*); “Music Form as Resistance: Some

Reflexions about the Precompositional Budgets” by Federico Eckhart (the role of musical material in the pre-compositional procedure); as well as “Frédéric Chopin’s *Preludes* op. 28 as a Cycle: Berislav Popović’s Deliberations on the Phenomenon of Directionality of Complex Music-Formal Entities”, a study co-authored by Tijana Popović Mladjenović and Ivana Petković Lozo (an application of Popović’s analytical method to Chopin’s *Preludes* cycle op. 28).

In his lifetime, Berislav Popović did not divert too much attention to his creative work in music. He acted as a fully committed pedagogue, as one of the best-loved professors at the Faculty of Music and a reliable and honest social worker who supported the creativity of his colleagues more than promoting his own. Carried by his own interests and professional destiny, he gradually replaced composing with researching the fundamental problems of music theory, establishing a unique interdisciplinary system of analyzing and understanding music and the world in his extensive study *Music Form or Meaning in Music*. It took a long time for his music not only to secure concert performances, but also to attract the attention of contemporary musicology. Now, coupled with a full awareness of his oeuvre in painting and especially his analytical universe, “because nothing is isolated and everything has its place in an even larger system”, a substantial and scholarly established body of work is emerging in Serbian musicology, wherein Berislav Popović is beginning to occupy his rightful place.