

# Renáta Beličová

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"Vývoj hudobnoestetického myslenia na Slovensku v 20. storočí (The development of music-and-aesthetic thinking in Slovakia in the 20th century)", Slávka Kopčáková, Prešov 2013

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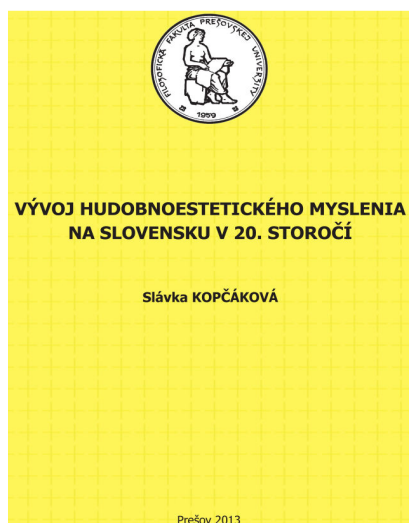
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**Slávka Kopčáková, *Vývoj hudobnoestetického myslenia na Slovensku v 20. storočí* (*The development of music-and-aesthetic thinking in Slovakia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*), Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity, Prešov 2013, 303 pp.**

## REVIEW

The present publication is an ambitious scholarly project, the design of which is unprecedented in Slovakia as of today. Music Aesthetics is a special type of Aesthetics that states key issues of Aesthetics in the field of aesthetic quality in music in different times differently. If discussing the history of Music Aesthetics is to be proper, it is necessary to admit that: 1) in the studied time period, the development of the music-and-aesthetic thinking in Slovakia has undergone specific development; 2) was part of the then trends and showed features typical of the development of general Philosophical Aesthetics. It has to be admitted that in the Slovak musicologist and aesthetic contexts the basic categories of Music Aesthetics have not been dealt with as an autonomous scholarly issue. In the Slovak aesthetic thinking, it has been considered with regard to the Aesthetics of New Music; initially in the essayistic framework, not methodological one.



However, as Slávka Kopčáková's work shows, this "lack" of authentic Slovak Music Aesthetics methodology was gradually substituted by numerous research papers written by many musicians and theoreticians, and ultimately eliminated by means of Jozef Kresanek's musicological thinking. The structuralistically oriented music-theory thinking in Slovakia overshadowed the music-and-philosophical (thus music-and-aesthetic) context of Kresanek's original scholarly method. In the Slovak music-and-aesthetic thinking, for a long time, this situation was typical; music theory and music historiography had primacy over music philosophy and aesthetics – the latter were only considered derivatives of the former. Systematic scholarly research in aesthetics by Slovak scholar Peter Faltin (living in Germany on a long-term basis) was only short and marginal contribution and had no influence on the evaluation of the studied period delimited by the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The book under review unveils this handicap of Slovak Music Aesthetics – a sense of duty towards music theory and a need to derive the legitimacy of aesthetics from the needs of music theory.

Most of the musicologist texts that Slávka Kopčáková included in the references show some kind of inclination towards philosophically stated issues of music culture. If any ontological questions arise, they are related to the framework of philosophy of arts rather than to mere music. In the half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or even earlier, specific issues of music were dealt with using different methodologies. In Slovakia, this has been happening on the basis of selection, and depending of a scholar and his/her expertise in the field. Also new methodologies emerged, e.g. experimental aesthetics (applied by P. Faltin). However, this was only an auxiliary argumentative tool for obtaining answers to questions that were beyond the psychologizing framework of Applied Aesthetics. This is seen mainly in the works advancing the concepts of semiotics and communication, and consequently also in those of music reception.

Among the best tradition of Slovak music-aesthetic texts that attempted to reflect on music as a manifestation of human creativity undoubtedly belong texts by Jozef Kresanek, Jan Albrecht, Ladislav Burlas, Roman Berger, or Vladimír Godar. Nevertheless, only Jozef Kresanek's texts bring about what can be called the commencement of systematic Music Aesthetics with clearly stated and (justified!) original methodology.

In the academic discourse, the term Music Aesthetics will always stand for a rigorously established scholarly field, yet its base is essentially created within a broader philosophical framework, and verified and recognized in pragmatic arts-criticism papers. Being aware of this complexity in establishing the field made Slávka Kopčáková cautiously approach the resources of music-and-aesthetic thinking in Slovakia. The author's self-confidence and scholarly self-assurance derives from her decent knowledge of source texts and professional evaluation of their relevance with respect to the development of music-and-aesthetic thinking in Slovakia.

The author divided the project into ten larger units; they correspond with a historiographical outline of Slovak music culture. It offers the optics different from that of the history of music culture; it focuses on the reflection of the history of Music Theory thinking, music works and music life. It is obvious that the author resorted to a range of genres, mostly essayistic and journalistic ones. The initial chapters evaluate to-date state of the art of scholarly research; the author reflects on aesthetics, aesthetic quality, and on their music distinctiveness from different viewpoints. The book starts with the founder figures of Slovak national music (Jan Levoslav Bella's reflections). Bella's

works are complemented with the then works of Mikulas Moyzes, in the author's view (and consistent with historical assessment), the first authentically philosophizing Slovak musician.

Slávka Kopčáková's treatise is built up in a chronological way, which exposes interesting interrelations. In Chapter 4, for instance, in the part devoted to Fric Kafenda, we can learn that this professional musician, as a matter of fact, was a kind of mediator of novel methodologies in Music Aesthetics (at the time, undoubtedly groundbreaking ones). These include Kurth's dynamic interpretation, music energetics, or Kretschmar's hermeneutics. Kafenda was Kretschmar's and Riemann's disciple, which makes us presuppose that through the acquaintance with them and studying under their supervision he achieved artistic and scholarly understanding of psychologism that was a menace of the two interpretation methods. Kafenda's familiarity with European avant-garde and his acquisition of quality methodology of music analysis and critical theory was indisputably an important factor in the further development of music-and-aesthetic thinking.

In the chapters to follow, particular stages of establishing music and aesthetic opinions in individuals and groups are presented. By means of both form and contents, Slávka Kopčáková's treatise leads us to the most prominent figures of Slovak music-and-aesthetic thinking: to Jozef Kresanek, Oto Ferencz, Alexander Albrecht, or Peter Faltin. It is worthy of praise that even in this chapter of history the author did not overlook traditional figures of philosophizing musicians, e.g. universal *science-morale*-oriented Jan Albrecht, or several musicologists with "aesthetic" competences. The final chapter on the "history" of music-and-aesthetic thinking in Slovakia covers the 1970's and 1980's – the time period when in the theoretical reflection of music works the notion of plurality emerges; this notion is representative of Music Aesthetics of the upcoming stages of the development of music culture in Slovakia.

Slávka Kopčáková's work represents the first attempt to cohesively and systematically observe the development of such considerations on music that go beyond the structuralistically enclosed science. The accumulation of historical evidence of the existence of philosophical thinking in music in Slovakia, transformed into scholarly relevant, yet original and methodologically authentic text, is of utmost importance. Not only is it a contribution to the historiographic research into the music life in Slovakia, but also it presents an account of the rudiments of Music Aesthetics offering both present-day music-and-aesthetic answers and those suggesting further development of Music Aesthetics as an assured component of musicology in Slovakia.

**Renáta Beličová**

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra Slovakia