

Marios Christou: Arvo Pärt – The Choral Tintinnabuli Compositions

The Opposer's Report

I have known Marios Christou for five years, since the very beginning of his study at our faculty. Thanks to his intelligence and diligence, he has made a great progress both in his theoretical knowledge and in his practical musical skills during these years. I know that he is specially interested in the music of the 20th century and modern composition techniques, that is why I was not surprised that he decided for the analytic kind of a diploma work. Since his second field of study is choral conducting, he chose for his analyses choral compositions of the contemporary Estonian composer Arvo Pärt.

He concentrated only on one period of his work which the composer called himself as Tintinnabuli style. In Introduction, M. Christou tries to put Pärt's Tintinnabuli style into context of the newest Western music and describes in a very knowledgeable way literature and sources he had to study.

The first chapter informs very briefly about the composer's career and most important periods of his work. Afterwards follow analyses of six representative compositions. In the first one, M. Christou describes the theoretical principles of Pärt's original composition technique in detail. The following analyses show how the composer used this on the first view reasonable and even mathematical method in larger compositions and its surprising possibility to express profound ideas and messages. The analyses and conclusions are documented with many examples from Pärt's scores.

I think, M. Christou showed his competence for this kind of musicological work in this central part of his diploma work.

I have a few critical notices and questions which should be answered. First, I did not understand the way the simple Tintinnabuli compositions are interpreted in term of the rhythm. In which way did Tintinnabuli style develop, was it even more complicated, more strict or more free? In Conclusion, I miss information whether Tintinnabuli style stayed only Pärt's individual affair or whether it influenced other composers, as well.

In my opinion, Christou's English language is on a high stylistic level, only sometimes we can find some grammatical mistakes. On the other hand, as a contrast to the high professional level, there are quit a lot formal errors (see for example p. 9, 20, 66). Despite this, I am sure that M. Christou wrote a valuable analytical monograph and showed his preconditions for future scholarship.

I recommend to mark this work as **excellent**.

Prague, 15th May, 2006

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