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TRANSPOSITIONS
TRANSLATIONS
TRANSFORMATIONS

MUSICOLOGICAL STUDIES: MONOGRAPHS

MUSIC/IMAGE: transpositions, translations, transformations...

Department of Musicology
Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade



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Editors

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman
Vesna Mikić
Tijana Popović Mladjenović
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Bojana Radovanović

Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, Univerzitet umetnosti u Beogradu

COMMUNICATION AND ANALOGIES BETWEEN MUSIC AND IMAGE: DRAGUTIN GOSTUŠKI'S THEORY OF THE SCREEN

ABSTRACT: In his doctoral dissertation (*Vreme umetnosti*, 1968), Dragutin Gostuški argues that one of the most important missions for the contemporary theory of the arts to partake in is to systematically examine matters through the methodology of comparative aesthetical morphology. Later, he proposes *the theory of screen* as a predetermined constructed system that enables the processing and decoding of “the data received from the real world and their interpretations through art, language and science”. In this paper, I will look into the mechanisms of Gostuški's theory and the use of holography as an interpretative technique that he proposes, as well as the possibility and the nature of those transpositions between music and the visual arts.

KEY WORDS: Gostuški; theory of screen; comparative aesthetics; musicology; inter-disciplinarity.

Introduction

Dragutin Gostuški (1923–1998) appeared on the Serbian music scene at the beginning of the 1960s, at first as a composer. However, at about the same time, he began his scientific work grounded in a number of related disciplines, regarding questions of music and the aesthetics of music. Those were also the years when Gostuški started working as a music critic, which remained one of the most important elements of his activity. Despite the fact that he left behind an extensive bibliography, and that his musicological activity offers an abundant and intriguing field for research, there is a lack of interest among Serbian musicologists in this particular part of their scientific field's history.¹

Instead of defining Gostuški's written works as primarily based in the field of the history of the arts or comparative aesthetics, the musicologists Roksanda Pejović and Katarina Tomašević insisted on the musicological nature of his rea-

¹ Gostuški's works were the subject of research in several texts by Katarina Tomašević. Roksanda Pejović dedicated a monographic study to Gostuški and Pavle Stefanović (Музичари-писци у београдском музичком животу друге половине 20. века – Комплексно посматрање музике: критичари, есејисти и естетичари [*Musicians-Writers in Belgrade Musical Life in the second half of 20th century – Complex Observation of Music: Critics, Essayists, and Aestheticians*], Београд, Универзитет уметности у Београду, Факултет музичке уметности, 2012).

soning.² This was enabled by what Gostuški would describe as one of the most important missions for his work. More specifically, he studied art by systematically examining the matter with the methodology of comparative aesthetical morphology, and, in doing so, he devoted special attention to music and its adequate involvement in the comparative study of the history of the arts. The premise on which he based his theoretical studies in this field propounds that the space between the arts, capable of the upkeep of numerous transpositions and transitions, should be regulated in a way that allows communication and understanding at any given moment. Thus, Gostuški suggests his *theory of screen*.

In this paper, I will take into account some of Gostuški's most significant scientific works – his doctoral thesis *Vreme umetnosti. Prilog zasnivanju jedne opšte nauke o oblicima*,³ defended in 1965 and published in 1968, and his papers *The Third Dimension of Poetic Language*⁴ published in the prestigious journal *The Musical Quarterly*, and *Realnost, muzika, jezik. Prilog proučavanju problema značenja*,⁵ presented at the First International Conference on the Semiotics of Music held in 1973 in Belgrade.

Although the theory of screen was introduced as such only in the latter, we are able to locate its inception in his doctoral dissertation.⁶ Admittedly, this theory was drafted as a method of analyzing music and poetry in a comparative fashion. Nevertheless, by advocating the opinion that all products of human action, together with all natural phenomena, can be brought down to the same analytical level and, consequently, to the same laws, Gostuški made it possible for further researchers to apply his theory of screen to the communication and relationship between not only music and poetry, but in fact any two chosen forms of art.

² Personally, I followed this viewpoint in my Master's thesis, in which I dealt with forms of interdisciplinarity in Gostuški's scientific writings (Наука као уметност: интердисциплинарност у научним радовима Драгутина Гостушког [Science as Art: Interdisciplinarity in the Scientific Studies of Dragutin Gostuški], 2015).

³ Dragutin Gostuški, *Vreme umetnosti. Prilog zasnivanju jedne opšte nauke o oblicima* [The Time of Art. Contribution to the Establishment of a General Science of Forms] (Beograd, Muzikološki institut SANU-Prosveta), 1968.

⁴ Dragutin Gostuški "The Third Dimension of Poetic Language", *The Musical Quarterly*, LV, 3 (1969).

⁵ Dragutin Gostuški, "Réalité, Musique, Langage. Contribution a l'Étude du Probleme de la Signification", *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, VIII/1 (1977); Драгутин Гостушки, „Реалност, музика, језик. Прилог проучавању проблема значења“, in: *Интердисциплинарне теорије књижевности, прир. Катарина Томашевић* (Београд: Институт за књижевност и уметност, 2001) 233–251.

⁶ Katarina Tomašević, „Vreme umetnosti Dragutina Gostuškog. Odnos Prema filozofiji i estetici Etjen Surioa“, in: *Srpska estetika u XX veku* by Mirko Zurovac (Beograd: Estetičko društvo Srbije, 2000), 142–143.

Thus, the goal of this paper is to acknowledge the important features of Gostuški's idea of the theory of screen and to discuss the application of the theory in the correlation between music and the visual arts, as presented in Gostuški's book *Vreme umetnosti*.

Holography – Art – Music

As a predetermined constructed system that enables the processing and decoding of “the data received from the real world and their interpretations through art, language, and science”, Gostuški suggests the *screen*, or, more precisely, the *theory of screen*. To be specific, in his text (*Realizam, muzika, jezik...*) Gostuški debates the possibility of examining the arts (primarily, the visual arts) through the principles of, in his words, “one quite modern interpretative technique”, regardless of the historical period in which the considered art is viewed.⁷ The technique in question is *holography*. In Gostuški's opinion, there are three factors in holographic reproduction: the first factor being the object found in nature, the second, the transposition of that said object which is fixed by a specific technique, and, the third, interpretation, whose effect has maximal compatibility with the first factor, the object from nature. This interpretation also includes the three-dimensional value of the object. The middle factor, transposition, is indeed the hologram which is structurally different from the other elements of the process, which, at the same time, cannot be easily or clearly defined.⁸

With the application of this principle to the analysis of the arts, Gostuški finds its logic rooted in the foundation of every form of art. At the same time, there is a system of rules situated between the object from nature and its aesthetic transposition. This system is generated through the artist's contact with the real world. Here, we can make a remark and notice the possibility of examining the correlation between Gostuški's formulation of the problem and the concept of signifying practice. However, this question is not the focus of this study, and I will not be examining it further. In any case, the system in which the artist is working is named as *the system of compulsory/obligatory reference*, and it is interpreted as a bulkhead, or, rather, a *screen* that stands between the artist and the object as it exists in the outer, real world. The screen in question provides the potential for the selection and treatment of the objects that are projected in accordance with the system. Likewise, the screen can serve to arrange a set of models which are used by the artist to enlighten the object/the work of art which is in the function of the system. Thereby, even if the artist is translating, or *transposing* a non-artistic form into an artistic one, or transposing one form from one system into another, he does not have the task of super-

⁷ Драгутин Гостушки, „Реалност, музика, језик...“, op. cit., 238.

⁸ Cf. Idem.

structuring, or of finishing what is ‘unfinished’ or ‘imperfect’ in nature. Nature and the artist himself are the part of the same world, as well as the artist’s system in which the art is conceived, and, by the same logic, the art itself.

The theory of screen emerged as a proposal for a theoretical system through which Gostuški addressed the question of the relationship between art and nature, or, as Katarina Tomašević has written, the question of realism in art and the theory of arts in general.⁹ The theory of screen, admittedly as yet without the name, was first drafted in the introduction to Dragutin Gostuški’s doctoral dissertation, *Vreme umetnosti*. Tomašević has studied the possible connections between the theory of screen and Etien Surriou’s idea of translation:

The theory of screen is carried out from a few basic ideas (...) from the Introduction to Gostuški’s dissertation. “The notion of realism gets its only possible interpretation (...) - through the compatibility with the idea we have about a certain thing with great respect to the given system. What is realistic is what is in accordance with the code of rules.” Music, which is “totally indifferent to the representation of nature in its real appearance” has its own music system to which the artist is subordinated as his reality. “The degree of realism is directly proportional to abiding by the rules”, while the “imitation” of object’s characteristics outside of the system leads to “vulgar naturalism”.¹⁰

Thinking about realism in art, or, more precisely, a comparative overview of realism in more than one art, led Gostuški to note that music itself is “far more realistic” and closer to its physical definition than, for example, the visual arts. The reason for this conclusion is the fact that there is “nothing in music that wouldn’t be accessible to an immediate acoustic analysis of its manifestations”.¹¹ The author thereby emphasizes his stand as to the groundlessness of analyzing music outside of its real world, as well as of searching for its extra-musical content that can be stated throughout language in its most ordinary meaning. If it is to say that language is represented by logical, that is, grammatical facts, and music by syntactic and affective elements, then we can confirm, Gostuški believes, that “music starts where language has stopped”.¹² In other words, music logically describes facts located in psychological reality, which are as realistic as material facts.

While, in Gostuški’s opinion, the Middle Ages were a time of inconsistent tendencies in different art forms, the Renaissance represented the time when the new, common worldview (*Weltanschauung*) was established as a *central principle*. This principle was one universal law, because of which we are able to find analogies in all art forms.

⁹ Katarina Tomašević, „Vreme umetnosti...“, op. cit., 143.

¹⁰ Idem.

¹¹ Драгућин Гостушки, „Реалност, музика, језик. Прилог проучавању проблема значења“, in: *Интердисциплинарне теорије књижевности*, прир. Катарина Томашевић, Београд, Институт за књижевност и уметност, 2001, 233–251, 241.

¹² *Ibid.*, 245.

The theory of screen: Music/Image

The study *Time of Arts* contains the nucleus of the ideas and thematic fields that were the focus of Gostuški's interpretations both before the dissertation and after. As his most significant scientific achievement, this book marked and directed his future work, which is characterized by a critical relationship with bibliography and the examining the epochs, style, and stages of art in broad strokes.¹³ To understand the arts through science, he activates the many disciplines of his expertise, and to answer the questions he posed in this study, he positions his viewpoint as an interdisciplinary scientist. With competencies in the history of architecture, the visual arts, literature, and the history of music, Gostuški tried to find one system in which he can examine different art works of the same epoch and style.

The system in question, which is to be "respected" by the artist in order to coordinate the representation of a certain thing with its interpretation, is the initial point for Gostuški's theory of screen. The basis of the first part of this book lies in the idea of desynchronization in the appearance of one stylistic epoch in different arts. It is possible to examine this problem in two ways: by considering (the individual) arts in continuous evolution, or by the vertical observation of several arts at one specific moment in history. That way, Gostuški raises the question of the transposition of elements that are characteristic of one epoch or style, and, by vertically relating various arts, he argues that it is readily apparent that different arts take on new stylistic qualities at different times.

In particular, "if the means of expression of one art are closer to the most necessary activities, existential needs, and everyday experience (like in the case of language), the forms of that particular art get their typical stylistic properties earlier than other arts".¹⁴ Visual arts and sculpture, together with architecture and literature, find themselves enriched with new features at the approximately same time. On the other hand, Gostuški pointed out that music "never gave style a new name", which is one of the main reasons for the fluctuations and insecurities in the attempts to include music in various classifications of the history of music. Here, Gostuški presents the idea of the *tardiness* of stylistic shifts, which can actually be the most applicable in the case of music history.

One of the main characteristics of this study, certainly, is the way Gostuški explored the period from the 12th to the 16th century. In what is usually (implic-

¹³ The particular thematic unity of this study is achieved by several hypotheses: 1) The notion of the periodical return to classicism; 2) The idea of tardiness of music in comparison with other arts, in terms of changing styles and aesthetic principles; 3) The idea of the acceleration of historical processes, based on Thomas Munro's evolution of arts. Cf. Katarina Tomašević, "The Man who was Trusted", in: *The Birth of Serbian Musical Culture* by Snežana Nikolajević (Ed.), (Beograd: Radio-Televizija Srbije-Muzikološko društvo Srbije, 2017), 9–24, 16.

¹⁴ Dragutin Gostuški, *Vreme...*, 36.

itly) seen as the Renaissance in the arts, as well as in music, he perceives things differently and justifies his conclusions by means of the methodology of comparative aesthetics. To be specific, in comparison to visual arts and architecture, he recognized the Romanic style as the first authentic style of music in European history, followed by the Gothic period. The time interval between 12th and 16th century is hereby defined as the Gothic period that witnessed “the art development of a unique and very specific way of thinking”.¹⁵ Gostuški makes analogies between the “visual polyphony and plastic counterpoint of Gothic architecture”, and vocal polyphony, whose peak is located in the 16th century.¹⁶ Due to the idea of the above-mentioned retardation of style shifting, the author indicates the validity of nearly 150 years of music falling behind. That is, if one new style appeared some 150 years after the Gothic architecture, and its characteristics can be studied through the theory of screen with the assumption of the transpositions of artistic ideas and principles, then it can be said that starting from as early as 1300, the Gothic emerged in music.

Gostuški states that the notion of a musical Renaissance remains “irrational” for musicology, as well as the history of arts. The difficulties in analysis are based on two main problems: (1) If the beginning of this period is marked by the return of antique values, music would not be able to rely on sources because the antique practice is almost completely unknown, and (2), As previously stated, music would have had the greatest difficulties in adapting both its mechanisms and its ‘language’. Gostuški believed that it is important to locate the beginning of the Renaissance in music in the very beginning of the 17th century, when “the last breath of the Middle Ages is shut down with death of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina”.¹⁷ If Palestrina’s death is a signifier of the end of an epoch, it is certainly not the epoch of the Renaissance. If this, however, is not the case, we would, among others, accept the facts that: (1) Music was the first to accept the Renaissance and the Baroque, and therefore has a specific *avant-garde* quality, (2) That in France, the musical Renaissance preceded the Humanist movement by around 150 years, and (3) That the turn of the Renaissance to the Baroque was transformed by virtue of the spontaneity of all of society’s classes, and not by the technical and stylistic interventions of professionals, and so on.¹⁸ The inception of the musical Renaissance, bearing in mind the above-mentioned tardiness of music and the remarks made here, is, thus, placed at the beginning of the 17th century, when the revival of classical Greek philosophy and art postulates occurred in music.

Following that line of thought, transpositions between the visual arts and music were also argued by Gostuški, in order to demonstrate the development

¹⁵ Ibid., 55.

¹⁶ Ibid., 57.

¹⁷ Ibid., 70.

¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., 70–71.

of music that is “identical with the sketch of main stages of history of visual arts and painting”. By drawing parallels between music and painting at the turning point of Middle Ages to the Renaissance, he looks for similarities in principles, techniques, and the final results – the works of art. To ‘paint the picture’, I will give some examples of this type of comparative examination.

Firstly, the treatment of space with more than one focal point and the indeterminate position of the observer in the paintings of the Middle Ages is replaced by perspective, which came out of the scientific achievements of that period. In addition, he argues, the linear principal was replaced by the more pure pictorial method, in which the morphological armature of the paintings are the result of contact between superimposed colored surfaces. When transposed in music, these features of Renaissance techniques and principles are apparent: melody became the result of a succession of chords, and the interweaving of musical lines is replaced by harmonic functions. By the abolition of asynchronism between the accented dots, the possibility of the vertical connection of the music line is created, thus generating a special system of musical parallels, the equivalent to the linear perspective system.

Table 1.

	The Middle Ages	The Renaissance
I <i>Music</i>	Melody as an independent parameter	Melody as chord succession resultant
<i>Painting</i>	Different focal points and the indeterminate position of the observer	Perspective
II <i>Music</i>	Interweaving melodic lines	Harmonic functions
<i>Painting</i>	Linear perspective	Superimposed colored surfaces

Concluding remarks

The chosen examples of the process of relating two different forms of art through the same system of rules demonstrated the modus of the theory of screen tht can be applied. The central principal is applicable to every other art, providing a specific network of in-between spaces that enable the pursuit of thos features which are noticeable in every individual artistic sphere.

The theory of screen also provides the strong foundation and enables Gostuški to create arguments in his journey through styles, their shifts, their tardiness, and the relationship between different forms of artistic expression. Furthermore, this theory and its methodology bring us closer to an understanding of Gostuški’s stand on Realism in art, which is immanently the subject of most of his scientific musicological works.

Although he did not further elaborate his proposal of the theory of screen after the paper in 1973, it can be said that Gostuški executed his comparative studying in the manner of his theory even before he came to a decision to try and articulate a specific system. That is exactly the reason why we can, in a way, ‘test the theory’ on his own, previous work.

SUMMARY

In this paper I examine the mechanisms of Dragutin Gostuški’s *theory of screen*, as well as *holography* – an interpretative technique he proposes. Likewise, the question is raised about the possibility and the nature of transpositions between music and the visual arts through this technique. The goal of this paper is to acknowledge the important features of Gostuški’s idea and to discuss the application of the theory in the correlation of music and the visual arts, as presented in Gostuški’s book *Vreme umetnosti. Prilog zasnivanju jedne opšte nauke o oblicima* (1968).

The first part of this article represents the analysis of the theory itself, as presented in Gostuški’s paper *Realnost, muzika, jezik. Prilog proučavanju problema značenja* (1973). Given the fact that some important settings of the theory were made in his book (*Vreme umetnosti*) from a few years before, the second part of the text looks into examples of the comparative overview of arts presented in this study, most notably, the issues of the musical Gothic and Renaissance period timeframes, and transposing the ideas, techniques, and principles in the different artistic fields of the time.