

Contemporary Female Composers in Bulgaria

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Abstract : Gender studies in post-communist Eastern Europe emerged in the early 1990s after the collapse of the communist regime. It can be explained by a series of cultural and political factors. However, Bulgarian female composers' contribution to Western art music has not been studied. This field shows us some aspects of the impact of globalization on gender issues. This paper outlines the female composers in the establishment of the modern Bulgarian state and society. It is dedicated to the Bulgarian award-winning female composers who studied in Western European and American universities in the 1990s. Many of them migrated to these regions as part of a great migration in which Bulgaria lost 2.3 to three million of its population and strived to modernize Bulgarian music. Nowadays, the Union of Bulgarian Composers has 262 members, but only 19 of them are women. The Grammy-awarded Penka Kouneva (b. 1967) is one of the few female composers in Hollywood. She composed and orchestrated film scores, music for video games and television. Anna-Maria Ravnopolska-Dean (b. 1960) is a Bulgarian/American harpist, arranger, composer, pedagogue and TV host. She wrote pieces for harp and chamber ensembles. Maria Panayotova (b. 1976) studied composition in the USA. Alexandra Fol (b. 1981) and Vania Angelova (b. 1954) work in Canada and are recipients of grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, among others. Afroditi Katmeridou, born in Bulgaria in 1956 by Greek parents, was the first woman who wrote electroacoustic music. One of the well-known contemporary composers is the British/Bulgarian Dobrinka Tabakova (b. 1980). She moved with her family to the United Kingdom when she was 11 and studied Composition at Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Her album String Paths was nominated for a Grammy award. Many female composers made a successful career in EU countries: Albena Petrovic-Vratchanska (Luxemburg), Yuliana Tochкова-Patrouilleau (France), Dariana Kumanova (Italy), Tsveta Dimitrova (Austria), Ivajla Kirova (Germany), Alexandra Karastoyanova-Hermentin (Austria) and more.

Keywords : bulgarian music, female composers, gender studies, western art music, migration

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