

PEER REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Todor Aleksandrov Kirov

for the creative and artistic activity of
Chief Assistant Dr. Rada Borislavova Slavinska,

candidate for participation in a competition
for occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor”
in the scientific specialty “Folk Choir Singing with Choir Science”,
in direction 8.3 “Music and Dance Arts”

at the Department of Musical Folklore, Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography, at
Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv

“Bulgarian choir singing has its origins in the collective performance of folk songs ... Folk choirs have become the reason for the emergence of a new song genre in Bulgarian choir art – songs for folk choir”

In the general flow of cultural life in our country the folk song takes its rightful place. The spontaneous existence of the traditional folk song creativity in the everyday life of the people continues to develop even today. However, the conditions of the time when folklore was the only source of artistic satisfaction are not the same. Objective prerequisites for this are created by *modernity*, which guides the processes in the development of traditional folk art. The transformations that are observed in the process of development, expressed both in the rethinking of the social function of the works and in the entry of new poetic themes, improvement of musical means of expression, musical form, etc., are an illustration of the ability of folk art to adapt to the requirements of the time. It is also natural for artists-composers to strive to create new, bright, and unheard of works, thus meeting the requirements of the audience – their music to be relevant and “up to date”. As early as the beginning of the last century, enthusiastic musicians-composers in the sense of “discovering the folk song as a national aesthetic value” reached for the Bulgarian folk songs, turning them into bright works of the great stage concert art.

The emergence of folk choir art in our country can be considered in the sense of treating the folk song as a “national aesthetic value”. Originating in the middle of the last century, it is developing upwards today, with the “interactive” participation of Bulgarian composers, thus creating a new kind of music, a new musical genre. What is the genre “Folk choir song” and what are the prerequisites for its emergence?

Rada Slavinska works competently and thoroughly on this topic. In 2009, she wrote the monograph “Chronology and Characteristics of the Songs for Folk Choir Genre”. In it, for the first time, the specific features and parameters of the genre are defined and the origin, development, and its various classifications are fully traced.

Today in the competition for Associate Professor in the scientific specialty “Folk Choir Singing with Choir Science”, Chief Assistant Dr. Slavinska presents another research paper on the topic "song for folk choir" entitled “Prerequisites for the Emergence of the Songs for Folk Choir Genre” as a habilitation thesis. It examines the roots, i.e. the events before the

appearance and establishment of the “folk choir song” genre, with the emphasis on the ways of incorporating the authentic folk song to the professional folk art, as well as the attitude of Bulgarian artists and composers, musicians, and public figures to it.

It is not known if a special study has been done so far, focusing on the “folk choir song” genre. The experience gained as an accompanist and conductor of elite Plovdiv choirs and a teacher of conducting and folk choir singing at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, justifies the motives and gives Slavinska courage for theoretical work related to folk and choir art. Her creative path and competence are a good prerequisite for elaborating in detail on this topic. This monograph is the first attempt to bring together a common research focus, and to illuminate, analyze, and systematize everything related to the prehistory of the “folk choir song” genre. The study covers processes and phenomena that occurred until the middle of the 20th century. It is made on an empirical basis, based on accurate facts and personal experience, and the analyzes are precise and theoretically in-depth.

Rada Slavinska graduated with a Master degree in 1986, defended her doctoral scientific and educational degree and an assistant position in 2012, and was appointed Chief Assistant at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in 2016. In 2017 she was accepted as a corresponding member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Her creative production is voluminous, versatile, and meaningful. For 35 years she has been professionally engaged in pedagogical and conducting work in the field of choir art. And this is documented with visual materials, backed by the talent and skills of her students. Definitely Slavinska has the necessary qualities and experience as a teacher and conductor, as well as skills for research work. She is the author of: Textbook of conducting, textbook “Short Course in Choir Science”, two monographs, 31 professional articles and reports in the specialized press, two voluminous musical works, more than 150 works and arrangements for mixed and homogeneous choir, a cycle of songs for children “Obarkvatsiya”, a collection of fairy tales for adults “If a Miracle Had Not Happened, a Song Would Not Have Been Sung”; she is the compiler of six collections of choir songs. As an artistic production Rada Slavinska has over 600 concerts in the country and abroad, 32 foreign tours, and participation in 29 international festivals.

All these components are criteria that the candidate for Associate Professor Dr. Slavinska has fully met the requirements of the Regulations for the implementation of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. There is a visually filled scientific-metric table with marked number of points on the individual indicators from the table for Higher Education field 8 “Arts”, Professional field 8.3 “Music and Dance Arts”. With a required 500 points, she scored 560.

Based on what has been said so far and on the presented habilitation materials, I give a high positive assessment of Slavinska’s work. I am convinced that Chief Assistant Dr. Rada Borislavova Slavinska is worthy of the academic position “ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR” in the scientific specialty “Folk Choir Singing with Choir Science”, in direction 8.3 “Music and Dance Arts” at the Department of Musical Folklore, Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography, at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv.

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