

## PEER REVIEW

by **Prof. Dr. Vesela Ivanova Geleva**, lecturer in “Choral Conducting” in the Musical Pedagogy and Conducting Department of the Faculty of Musical Pedagogy at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv

for **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zornitsa Dimitrova Petrova**, lecturer in “Piano,” “Chamber Music,” “Piano Accompaniment” and “Methodology and Pedagogical Practice of Piano Accompaniment” in the Piano and Accordion Department of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv, candidate in the competition for occupation of the academic position of “Professor,” specialty “Piano (Piano Accompaniment and Piano),” Higher education field 8. “Arts,” Professional field 8.3. “Music and Dance Arts”

Zornitsa Petrova was born in Plovdiv in the family of famous musicians, performers and educators. She graduated with a gold medal from Dobrin Petkov National School of Music and Dance Art, and later from Prof. Pancho Vladigerov National Music Academy in Prof. Lili Atanasova’s piano class and Prof. Vladimir Avramov’s chamber music class. She also studied Applied Composition. Her active concert activity began in her school years, when she won her first awards. Since 1991, Assoc. Prof. Petrova has been working at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts as a piano teacher, and since 2000 – piano accompaniment. She defended her doctoral dissertation on the topic “*The Songwriting of Franz Liszt.*” Since 2013, Zornitsa Petrova has been an Associate Professor of piano accompaniment and piano.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petrova is a musician with an extremely wide range of creative interests. Her repertoire includes works from the Baroque era to modern times, including numerous concert cycles. She has successfully participated in a number of prestigious music forums such as the “Sofia Music Weeks” Festival, the International Chamber Music Festival in Plovdiv, “Winter Music Evenings” in Pazardzhik, the International Festival for Contemporary Piano Music “Pianissimo” in Sofia, Musical Holidays “Petko Staynov” in Kazanlak, and others. She is also the author of a large number of scientific publications in the Musical Horizons Magazine, ArtSpecter Magazine, “Gallery of Words – Musical Logos” and the Yearbook of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. Since 2014, she has been performing concerts under the title “Masterpieces of the Small Vocal Genre,” in which she partners with prominent vocal artists. On her initiative, the activity of the academic club “Contemporary Piano Culture” was restored. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zornitsa Petrova is the author of artistic and creative projects, including: “Piano Art at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts,” the National Academic Competitions “Johann Sebastian Bach and His Contemporaries,” the First International Competition “Johann Sebastian Bach Soli Deo Gloria,” and others. She currently heads the Piano and Accordion Department.

In the announced competition for occupation of the academic position of "Professor," Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petrova participated with a book based on a defended dissertation work "*The Songwriting of Franz Liszt*," the studios "Anatoly Konstantinovich Lyadov and his Pianistic Work. Significance in the Traditions of Russian Piano Culture," author's concert with solo and chamber works Retrospective "Sans Résonance," 4 leading performances – two piano recitals according to Bartók and Chopin programs, the chamber concert "Troubadours of Love," and a concert performance of the "Orpheus" Opera of Christoph Willibald Gluck. In addition, two leading performances are presented – a performance of Chausson's "Poem Opera 25 for Violin and Piano" /recorded and released on CD/ and an integral of sonatas for violin and piano by Hindemith. Also included are seven chamber concerts with varied thematic programs, including works by Mercadante, Beethoven, M. Pekov, V. Kazandzhiev, and many others. In accordance with the requirements, the candidate indicates the required number of citations or reviews in scientific publications. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petrova has participated in two studios and 7 artistic projects, 6 of which she was the leader of. The attached reference for the fulfillment of the minimum scientific requirements shows a rich and varied activity, exceeding many times what is necessary for the procedure. The evidence is presented precisely and illustrates in detail the contribution of the candidate's activity.

The author's concert "Sans Résonance" makes an extremely strong impression, in which "Variations" for 4 hands, "Caprice" for solo clarinet, "Suite" for piano, and "Apollinaire cycle" for soprano and piano are presented. Impactful and penetrating, subtle and emotionally colorful, dynamic and meaningful – this is how I would characterize the musical language of Zornitsa Petrova, who demonstrates impeccable taste, solid erudition, and technical compositional mastery in the genres she chooses. In the richness of ideas and themes, she achieves deep suggestion and shows an aesthetic maturity and delicacy inherent in the miniature. The conceptual framework, set with two exquisite piano adaptations of Schubert songs, completes the feeling of a complete experience of a harmonious and original author's world.

The concert "The Big World of Mikrokosmos," dedicated to the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Béla Bartók, presents a high level of piano mastery. A variety of strokes, rhythms, moods, light shadows, and detailed nuances in all components of musical expression – from rough primalness to gentle fleshlessness – these are a small part of the interpretation and technical skills demonstrated by Zornitsa Petrova. The characteristic of her musicianship in the concert with Chopin's nocturnes, dedicated to the memory of Rostislav Yovchev, where she skillfully and delicately reveals the poetic perfection of the selected samples, is similar.

In partnership with the tenor Jamie Damon from the USA, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petrova performed the concert "Troubadours of Love," the idea of which once again wins attention with its originality and taste. The selected songs by P. Hadzhiev, Jules Massenet and R. V. Williams deliver real delight with the rich palette of feelings, thrills, and hidden intimacy. Once again, the performer's professionalism as an equal partner and inspirer

should be noted, as well as her ability to recreate contrasting images in an impactful and penetrating way.

Among the leading performances of the candidate, the first for Bulgaria concert performance of the Paris version of the “Orpheus” Opera by Christoph Willibald Gluck, stands out. Assoc. Prof. Petrova’s participation is distinguished by skill and deep knowledge of Gluck’s compositional style. Performing the part of the orchestra in the piano excerpt, she skillfully presents the specifics of the musical era, demonstrates clarity and precision in the attitude to the vocal parts, shows her ability to organize, and leads the recreation of dramaturgical features, plot lines, and form formation.

Along with all the numerous concert appearances of Zornitsa Petrova mentioned in the reference and outside of it, two publications of hers that contribute in a scientific sense are also presented. The book *“The Songwriting of Franz Liszt”* is the first detailed study of its kind, which includes an aesthetic-musicological view, piano-instrumental issues, and ensemble interpretation. Issues of structure, melodic-harmonic characteristics, genre evolution, and the basics of pianistic technique are touched upon. The author substantiates the thesis about Liszt’s genre revolution in the construction of the solo song as a work with a leading instrumental beginning. The specificity and linguistic problems of the poetic texts, on which Ferenc Liszt composed his songs (verses in French, German, Italian, Russian, English, and Hungarian languages), are also analyzed. The contribution value of the research is emphatically condensed with a series of integral recitals, which represent a kind of “creative experimental laboratory.”

The studio “Anatoly Konstantinovich Lyadov and his Pianistic Work. Significance in the Traditions of Russian Piano Culture” was written with the aim of reminding about an underappreciated and marginalized music of contemporary performance. Zornitsa Petrova explores the composer’s piano work in depth, with an interest in his background and biographical conditioning. The object of her analysis is: the peculiarities of the piano style and expression, the imagery, the specific musical language, the ideas, the vivid programming, the influence of Russian folklore and Western European romanticism, genre and form-forming principles, etc. The studio arouses professional interest and achieves the goals of its author – to provoke new performing interpretations, through which to revive the work of this forgotten composer.

My personal impressions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zornitsa Petrova date back to our student years at Dobrin Petkov National School of Music and Dance Art, when she already confidently declared her talent and motivation to develop as a high-class professional. I have attended many of her concerts in recent years and I sincerely admire the originality of ideas, the choice of repertoire and its interpretation, the erudite presentation of the music, the marked sense of style, and the originality of each author she performs. Her bright artistic presence is equal both in solo performances and in chamber music, where she manages to emotionally balance and guide the musical process at the level of poetry, philosophy, and psychology.

It is difficult to assess the activity of a bright artistic person through the matrix of legal requirements, tables and, to some extent, schematically formulated criteria. The musical interpreter inhabits other dimensions of art, where the quality of the performance cannot always be clothed in verbal expression. And yet, in conclusion of all the above and after analyzing the materials presented by the candidate, proving a voluminous and multi-directional activity, I strongly support the candidacy of Associate Professor Dr. Zornitsa Petrova for occupation of the academic position of "Professor" under Higher education field 8. "Arts," Professional field 8.3. "Music and Dance Arts" and I wish her success and satisfaction in her future performing, scientific, and teaching activities.

28.07.2023

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