

REVIEW

by Prof Borislav Aleksandrov Yassenov, PhD

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts

“Prof. Asen Diamandiev” – Plovdiv

With order No RD-27-016 dated 01.04.2021 of the Rector of AMDFA “Prof. Asen Diamandiev”, Plovdiv, I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury to supervise a procedure for the defense of a dissertation work on topic ‘Theoretical and analytical aspects of the unity between poetry and music in the solo art songs of Ivan Spasov’ for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree **Doctor** in Higher education field 8. Arts, Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, doctoral program "Musicology and music art". The author of the dissertation is Aliya Sahl Hanse – full-time doctoral student at the Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performing Arts, Faculty of Music Pedagogy, with academic supervisor Assoc. Prof. Plamen Nikolaev Parvanov from AMDFA “Prof. Asen Diamandiev”.

The materials presented to me include the following documents:

- CV;
- dissertation work;
- abstract;
- list of scientific publications.

I know the candidate Aliya Hanse as a responsible, responsive, conscientious colleague working hard to develop and improve her competencies in the field of music, showing responsibility and determination in carrying out his tasks.

She completes her secondary musical education at National School of Art „Panayot Pipkov” in Pleven, in 2012, with a professional qualification musician - vocalist. The same year she continues her education in conducting at Academy of Music Dance and Fine Arts „Prof. Asen Diamandiev”, Plovdiv.

In 2012, she becomes post-graduate student and actress in children and youth theatre performances at A’part Theater Studio with director Shasho Petkov.

In 2016 she starts conducting practice at the Academic Opera Theater of AMDFA „Prof. Asen Diamandiev” under the supervision of Prof. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak and Assoc. Prof. Plamen Parvanov. In December 2016 she participates at the 16-th Academic Competition „Johann Sebastian Bach and His Contemporary“ in the category „Piano (compulsory instrument)”, and wins second prize, in the category „Chamber Ensembles“ as conductor of the Vocal Ensemble „Pro belcanto“ at Academic Opera Theater she is awarded

the first prize. She participates in a number of concerts as conductor of vocal ensemble „Pro belcanto“ of the Symphony Orchestra of National School of Music and Dance „Dobrin Petkov“ and as a director of productions: *Bastien and Bastienne* – one-act opera by W A Mozart (2017), *The Gambler* (Il Giocatore) – one-act opera by Luigi Cherubini, with which she participates in the first Chamber Opera Festival in Sofia (2019), *Ba-ta-clan* – one-act opera by Jacques Offenbach with the premiere for Bulgaria and participation in the second Chamber Opera Festival, Sofia (2020).

In 2017 she graduates as Conductor with a Master's degree.

On 15.09.2020 she is appointed as an assistant lecturer at AMDFA „Prof. Asen Diamandiev“ in the Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performing Arts, Faculty of Music Pedagogy.

Since her student years, the doctoral candidate has been developing active research activities and participating in scientific forums such as "Spring Scientific Readings", International Scientific Conference at AMDFA “Prof. Asen Diamandiev” and others. She also has published articles in the academic cultural-information periodical Art Spectrum.

Together with her conducting and pedagogical practice at the Academic Opera Theater, she actively works as a conductor of Evmolpeya Girls Choir at the choir school "Young Voices", Plovdiv, Boys' Choir „Stefka Blagoeva“ at the choir school of the same name, Plovdiv, and Male Chamber Choir "Panagyurtsi", Panagyurishte.

The list of the scientific publications shows that they are three and they are directly related to the topic of the dissertation, which logically finalizes the research of the doctoral candidate so far. The publications are presented at:

- Scientific conference “Spring scientific readings” at AMDFA “Prof. Asen Diamandiev”, Plovdiv - *Characteristic compositional and stylistic features in some of the works of Ivan Spasov from the period 1965 – 1970* (2018, p. 107-112, ISSN 1314-7005) and *The solo vocal work of Ivan Spasov in the period 1953 - 1963*. (2019, p. 19-27, ISSN 1314-7005);
- 2nd International Scientific Conference “Science, Education and Innovation in the Field of Art, AMDFA “Prof. Asen Diamandiev”, Plovdiv, *The individual approach of the composer Ivan Spasov to the verbal text in his solo songs* (2019, p. 140-147, ISBN 978-954-2963-56-1).

Initially, I was impressed by the choice of a topic focused on the work of the person and composer Ivan Spasov, an emblematic figure of international importance, who contributed to the development of both Bulgarian musical culture and in particular the

AMDFA “Prof. Asen Diamandiev”- Plovdiv. Knowing the creative approach and contemporary interpretation of the composer, the topic of the dissertation aroused lively interest in me.

Considering that the chamber-vocal songs take up a significant place in the composer's work, the candidate pays attention and makes the first large-scale theoretical-analytical study of the composer's solo artistic songs.

The relevance of the topic of the dissertation “Theoretical and analytical aspects of the unity between poetry and music in the solo art songs of Ivan Spasov” is determined by the dynamics in the development of the contemporary music, the need for adequacy to the requirements of time, leading to consideration, analysis, acquaintance with compositional techniques typical for the work of contemporary Bulgarian composers, as well as renewal of the approaches in the methodology of teaching their works and their implementation in the performing practice.

The topic is provoked on the one hand by the increased research interest in the composers of the XX century, and in particular in the personality and work of Ivan Spasov. It is aimed at the problems of the vocal works of the composer, due to his affinity for this genre, giving a broad perspective in theoretical and analytical terms to reach the essence, views and worldview of the artist.

The choice of the topic is also provoked by the interest of A. Hanse in the development of the chamber vocal genres in the Bulgarian music and in particular the solo works of I. Spasov in a philosophical-abstract aspect, affecting the achievements and characteristics of the author's creative individualism, and in direct connection with the performing and pedagogical work of the candidate.

The dissertation discusses the characteristic features in the music of the XX century, as well as the specifics of modern compositional techniques in the world, European and Bulgarian musical culture. Attention is paid to some general characteristics of the overall work of Ivan Spasov.

The objectives of the work are:

- systematization of the works in the genre of solo art song in the works of I. Spasov;
- analyzing the problems and the characteristic features of the works;
- finding and publishing unpublished solo songs, for practical applicability and provoking the performer's interest in them.

The object of the dissertation work are the solo art songs for vocals and accompaniment in the works of Ivan Spasov.

The subject is the specificity in the verbal, dramatic and technological peculiarities in the process of creating the works, as well as the inseparable unity of poetry and music in the chamber-vocal genre, refracted through the personal aesthetic worldview of the artist.

The above also determines the tasks consisting of the following:

- research of the place and significance of the solo vocal works in the work of Ivan Spasov;

- chronological presentation of the solo vocal works of I. Spasov and periodization of his works;

- analyzes of the poetic material in the songs;

- musical-aesthetic analyzes of solo art songs of Ivan Spasov.

The research methods are theoretical, analytical, deductive and diagnostic.

The research presents the solo songs, and to their musical construction the doctoral student proceeds from the meaning and influence of the verbal text, the suggestion provoking the creative essence of the composer, as well as from the synthesis between poetry and music. Attention is also paid to the challenges of ensemble music making.

The paper contains an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and appendices in which the aspects of the trinity between word, vocal and accompaniment are considered and presented.

In the Introduction to this in-depth and thorough study, the doctoral student presents the object, subject, goals, tasks, methods and presents his scientific hypothesis.

The first chapter *Literature Review* presents in general studies concerning the world music culture of the XX century, modern trends in the development of the Bulgarian music culture and the work of Ivan Spasov as part of it. Some important phenomena and directions related to the beginning of the targeted period are considered. Attention is paid to publications, opinions, reviews and criticism of the vocal and vocal-instrumental work of the composer.

The second chapter *Portrait of the artist* is dedicated to the creative personality Ivan Spasov. The main life positions and creative views of the artist are presented. A periodization of the composer's work has been made, the basis of the work serving as a starting point towards the development of the studied genre.

In the third chapter *Analyzes of the poetic material in the solo art songs of Ivan Spasov*, the attention is focused on the poetic texts, as basic, according to the style of the individual poets and the messages they carry. Hence the emotional suggestions, transformed by the composer, provoked by his personal philosophical and aesthetic attitudes. Analyzing

the ideological and emotional preconditions caused by the creative collaboration between a composer and a poet, the doctoral candidate substantiates the choices Ivan Spasov makes for his vocal lyrics. The discussion of the poetic text, as a basis for the vocal works of the composer, in a separate chapter of the research is determined by the fact that:

- poetic texts give meaning and inspiration to the creative work of the composer, i.e. they are the primary sources of the vocal works, hence the conclusion that the ideological and emotional orientation of a verbal work predetermines the character of the musical work;

- the works of the literary genre exist independently, and analyzing the means of expression and the interpretation of the vocal lyrics, the candidate finds the basic role of the verbal text.

In chapter four *Musical analysis of the songs for voice and accompaniment in the works of Ivan Spasov*, through musical-aesthetic analyses the candidate examines the trinity between text, vocals and accompaniment. She systematizes all the songs of the discussed genre in chronological order, reaches conclusions and deductions, which she classifies according to the ideological and aesthetic principles and approaches of the composer.

The interviews with Prof Vasilka Spasova, Prof Roxana Bogdanova, Assoc. Prof Zornitsa Petrova, attached to the dissertation are enriched with different points of view regarding the ideas about the personality and work of Ivan Spasov.

An important contribution is the presentation of musical scores of unpublished solo songs of the composer, provided by the personal archive of Prof Vasilka Spasova.

A. Hanse systematizes huge in volume and quality content. Using the deductive method she approaches from the general to the particular, namely from the historical preconditions and stylistic characteristics of the contemporary musical art - from European to the Bulgarian, and in particular the work of Ivan Spasov, as a search and compositional technique, style, aesthetic taste - from overall creativity to characteristics of his solo art songs. Two plans are presented chronologically in this in-depth theoretical study.

The paper examines and systematizes a large amount of information related to previous studies and developments in this field. The characteristic features of the style and creativity of the famous composer are described. A special contribution is the larger research, analysis and systematization of his solo art songs.

All this will further enrich the theoretical and practical skills of the conductors and performers, as well as expand the competencies of the music educators. The above determines the contributing nature of the dissertation.

I am convinced that this in-depth and detailed study will provoke further research and development in connection with the work of Ivan Spasov, or other famous contemporary Bulgarian composers.

The above describes a prerequisite for enriching the knowledge and aesthetic worldview, improvement, and why not provoking the development of new approaches helping the quality and innovation in conducting training, and enriching the professional capabilities of the performers.

The work meets the requirements for writing a dissertation. A large amount of information has been collected, systematized and analyzed and presented in a total of 242 pages. The explanations are supported with appropriate score examples - 15, which contribute to creating an even clearer idea of the object of the study.

The bibliography contains 113 titles of books, scientific articles, reports, periodicals and internet sources.

The abstract is prepared according to the requirements and gives a clear idea of the content, object, subject, goals, objectives, research tools and reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation.

The contributions of the work are as follows:

- this is the first comprehensive and systematic review of Ivan Spasov's ar songs for soprano and accompaniment;
- scores of unpublished works of the researched genre have been published;
- a specific genre is presented chronologically and through the verbal and musical-aesthetic analyses, for the first time the repertoire for solo soprano in the composer's work is systematized;
- an important aspect is the examination of the poetic texts, which emphasizes their highly artistic role and significance for the works of the composer, as well as the affinity of Ivan Spasov for poetic art;
- for the first time a large part of the songs are analyzed, emphasizing their important place in Spasov's work, in order to provoke the interest of both researchers and performers in them;
- the research has practical applicability, to which we add the perspective for publishing a collection of yet unknown musical scores of the author and their inclusion in the dissertation;

- the interviews contribute with useful advice for the interpretation of the artistic work of Ivan Spasov, from the rich experience of the conductor Prof Vasilka Spasova, the pianist Prof Roxana Bogdanova and the vocal performer Assoc. Prof Zornitsa Petrova.

The work is structured, formatted and formulated precisely. The style, the clear expression and the scientifically substantiated analyses in the dissertation make a strong impression. The language is academic and at the same time understandable and accessible. Each considered problem is theoretically substantiated and clearly explained - each chapter ends with conclusions. The vocabulary is rich, full of professional terms, revealing the subtext and essence of the work. I would recommend the tonalities and functions to be written in accordance with the requirements for Latin notation (*G major, e moll*) accepted by our music-theoretical system, which will be in line with the style of the dissertation.

The theoretical development of the candidate has practical applicability and is oriented both to the educational work and to the artistic activity.

This determines the contributing nature of the dissertation.

In conclusion, I will point out that the dissertation of Aliya Hanse *Theoretical and analytical aspects of the unity between poetry and music in the solo art songs of Ivan Spasov* impressed me with the depth of the subject, analysis and scientific-theoretical justification written in professional and at the same time accessible language. From what is stated in the work it is evident that Aliya Hanse is an erudite musician, with a rich musical-theoretical training, broad outlook, affinity for contemporary music art and an innovative approach to research. I believe that the theoretical development meets the requirements for the acquisition of educational and scientific degree Doctor, stipulated by the Law for the development of the academic staff. This gives me reason to propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Aliya Sahl Hanse the educational and scientific degree of Doctor.

30.05.2021

Prepared by:
(Prof Borislav Yassenov)