

REVIEW

by Prof Svetla Georgieva Kaludova-Stanilova, PhD

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On: Theoretical work and concerts part of doctoral thesis for awarding
educational and scientific degree *Doctor*,

Professional field (code 8.3): Music and dance art, Scientific specialty Musicology and music art

Author: Denitsa Dimitrova Vasileva, doctoral candidate at the Department of Music Folklore at the
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Topic: The Bulgarian folk song and its contemporary interpretation

Academic supervisor: Prof. Dr. Kostadin Buradjiev

The folk song is part of the development of Denitsa Vasileva from her childhood, through her individual singing training and as a student at the Academy of Music Dance and Fine Arts in the Bachelor program Pedagogy of Music Education in the Master’s program Media Music Editing. After graduating, she starts working as a member of the folk choir of AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev”. She also teaches folk singing for three years at the National School of Music and Dance "Dobrin Petkov" and hosts a folklore show for one year on Radio Plovdiv. Today she is a concert singer with the ethno formations Folk Line and Nazdravitsa, and is a part-time lecturer of folk singing at the Department of Music Folklore at AMDFA, has records with the orchestra of the Bulgarian National Radio.

The professional career of the author of the theoretical works and concerts proposed for review - Denitsa Vasileva, clearly suggests the reason why she chose the research topic: *The Bulgarian Folk Song and its Contemporary Interpretation*. The selected thesis for theoretical development of her artistic doctoral dissertation is presented with an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and bibliography of the used literature. The structure and content of the work are a success for the doctoral candidate. It is characterized by well-established, logical consistency and completeness. The scientific text proposed to our attention is competent and creative. The narrative is accurate, clear and legible. The used, significant amount of scientific literature (78 titles in Bulgarian) is correctly and accurately mentioned. The text suggests a broad, multifaceted research approach, through which the doctoral student accepts the challenge of presenting a comprehensive theoretical study that finds its place in the contemporary research trends, in line with the aesthetics of the time. In this sense, Denitsa Vasileva presents a research with a contribution to the folklore science and practice.

The introduction emphasizes the relevance of the problem and its significance. The object, the subject, the objective and the tasks are convincingly presented. The objective specifies the tasks

that structure the individual chapters in theoretical and applied aspects. The clearly and precisely formulated methodological framework finds expression in the methods: analysis, comparison and synthesis, and in the artistic part: stage conceptuality, audiovisual demonstration, modern aestheticization and subjective interpretation.

Although brief, the literature review analyzes, groups and systematizes very diverse theoretical sources, on which the dissertation draws useful summaries and conclusions and makes its additions with practical applicability. This is the first dignity of work, which is the result of purposeful and thorough work.

The first chapter offers many facts that describe a number of influences on the origin and development of the folk song. This process is traced from the tradition to the modern times, logically beginning with lamentations - the mourning songs called by the doctoral candidate "lamenters". Together with the nursery rhymes, they are the foundation of the improvisational singing skills. Here, through a narrative approach, the ancient traditional song practice is presented. A theoretical classification of the songs by theme, form and structure is offered. The emphasis is on their basic importance for a change in the approach to the prototype and the performing practice in the ratio: tradition - modernity. The melody and the ornamentation are analyzed as one of the adaptive elements of the folk song, the development of which is a result of the vocal technique and the interpretation of the individual singer.

The research establishes a change not only in the melodic line, metro-rhythmic structure and lyrics, in the approach of the composers, but also in the increase of the audience requirements to the performing skills of the singers and the culture of sound. Based on these statements, Denitsa Vasileva draws her conclusion "gradually the folk song was seen as an aesthetic category". Thus she draws the conclusion about the adaptability of the folk songs to modern times

The second chapter "The role of institutions for the development of the folk song" pays special attention to the education centers, media and ensembles. The popularization of the folk song with its musical-regional specifics on the concert podium, through the air of the National Media, the recording industry, educational institutions and choral music, lead to the development and change of melodies. Very valuable for the work are the reflections on the approaches of different composers to traditional models and their development to larger music forms. In section II.2 "Folk song and dance ensembles - a kind of engine of evolutionary processes", the candidate explains the popularization of the music folklore, through a collective way of making music in ensembles and stage performances. For Vasileva, this is "a new way of interpreting the folk song" (p. 67). An important place in the research is given to the compositional style and approach to the folk melody by prominent composers. At the center of the research is the musical form and structure, in which the musical theme and the texture are developed, the logical connection between the melody, ornamentation and

performing technique of the singers is sought. After a thorough analysis, significant conclusions have been made regarding the means of expression in the songs, the compositional language and the manners of performance, differentiated in the different musical and folklore areas.

Important for the theoretical research is the information given about the career, repertoire and vocal technique of emblematic singers and their contribution to the development of the folk song, as well as the influence of the instrumental accompaniment. The research proves that under the influence of arrangements for instrumental groups and orchestras, the folk song takes a new path of development. Instrumental improvisation influences the performances of the singers, as well as the melodies themselves, there is a sense of dependence and interaction between vocal, instrumental music and performing techniques, new approaches are sought through improvisation. "The enriched the folk song acquires a different artistic value, which becomes the basis for future folk singers" (p. 65). These findings of Denitsa Vasileva are a conceptual basis on which she builds the programs for six concerts, realized according to the requirements of the artistic and creative doctoral program. The conclusions made are in support of the chosen topic and the used research approach.

Valuable for the work are the reflections on the role and place of the folk song in the educational institutions, as centers for preservation and enrichment of the original songs to the maximum extent. The existing scientific and methodical literature supports the process of mastering the song, beyond the traditional forms of existence. Professional singers and instrumentalists are being trained to continue the path of preservation and evolutionary development of the national folklore heritage.

In the course of the research, the doctoral student focuses on the factors that influence traditional music and change it according to the aesthetics of the time. "This contributed by the singing competitions, the media and the collaboration with different world styles such as: jazz, classical, film music, pop, rock, etc." "All this creates a different intonation background and changes the primary sense of folklore" (p. 111). According to the author, instrumental music and style have the strongest influence. The main drivers are the "wedding orchestras" and the singers with outstanding improvisational talent. They bring changes to the melody and ornamentation, the mood and interval construction, ambition, form and structure. This inevitably imposes certain requirements on the musical and performing culture of the singers. "The folk singers, provoked by the complex improvisational skills of the instrumentalists, try and create sufficiently complex ornamental song patterns" (p. 84). The pursuit of a new "modern" sound also leads to some negative deviations from the original, regional characteristics, such as a mixture of stylistic features. Gradually, "author's songs based on folklore" appeared, through which a "new sound" was sought.

A merit of the dissertation is that each chapter ends with a summary and offers valuable conclusions that make the information in it practically applicable. By clarifying the issues related to

the origin of the folk song, its stylistic features and the changes it has undergone in the stages of its development, reaching the present, the dissertation achieves its objectives. The conclusion summarizes its contributions, which are important for the enrichment of folklore science. The research successfully achieves its goals not only in theoretical terms, but it also achieves applied results, demonstrated through the repertoire of the concerts part of the doctoral studies. I fully accept the presented contributions of the work, which are analytically presented and reliably highlighted. Denitsa Vasileva has three publications in the period 2017-2019. As their topic is related to the dissertation and fully meet the requirements for obtaining the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor".

As part of the artistic and creative doctoral studies, the work includes six concerts performed by the doctoral candidate. The main line connecting the concerts is tracing the development stages of the folk song in time and its evolutionary changes, through a stage performance. The concerts are attached to the work on a CD with recordings, photos of posters and programs, as well as opinions from their discussions in the Department of Musical Folklore at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev". They are performed with different formations and orchestras:

1. First concert (01.03.2017, Studio One of Radio Plovdiv) - Concert with the participation of the Folk Orchestra of the Bulgarian National Radio. Performance of original songs based on folklore.
2. Second concert (04.04.2018, Concert Hall of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev") - Concert with the formation "Folk Line". Presentation of folk songs, through the unusual combination of folk and classical musical instruments, folklore from different regions of Bulgaria with pop and jazz elements.
3. Third concert (15.05.2019, Concert Hall, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev") - Concert with the participation of the Academy Folk Orchestra. Presentation of emblematic songs of old masters from different folklore areas.
4. Fourth concert (28.01.2020, Concert Hall, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev") - "Lyrical choral masterpieces". Demonstration of singing abilities in various aspects of modern professionalism - as a soloist and as a chorister.
5. Fifth concert (29.11.2020, Concert Hall, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev") - The concert aims to show the influence of wedding orchestras on folk songs.
6. Sixth concert (14.05.2021, Concert Hall, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev") - Demonstration of the change in the traditional sound of the folk song under the influence of keyboard accompaniment.

The presented concerts and their programs, the vocal technique of the candidate and her personal concern for the interpretation of the folklore songs is a significant contribution to the performing and pedagogical practice.

The considered theoretical work and six concerts in doctoral thesis of the candidate Denitsa Vasileva have a serious scientific-practical and applied value. They meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations for its implementation. Based on all of the above, I strongly support the author and the presented text and concerts. I express my positive assessment of the work and the concert repertoire, based on the above contributions. I strongly recommend to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Denitsa Dimitrova Vasileva with the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor” in Professional Field (8.3): Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty: Musicology and Music Art.

15.02.2022

Prof Dr. Svetla Stanilov