

REVIEW

by Prof Ventsislav Dimov (Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski";
Institute of Art Studies - BAS)

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Professional Field 8.3 Music and Dance with a dissertation work titled *The Bulgarian Folk Song and its Contemporary Interpretation*

to Denitsa Dimitrova Vasileva, full-time doctoral student (doctoral program Musicology and Music Art) at the Department of Music Folklore, Faculty of Music Folklore and Choreography, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv, with academic supervisor: Prof Kostadin Buradzhiev.

Introduction with presentation of the doctoral candidate

Denitsa Dimitrova Vasileva is a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Music Folklore, Faculty of Music Folklore and Choreography at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv, with academic supervisor Prof Kostadin Buradzhiev. Prior to her doctoral studies (enrolled in 2016), she studied at AMDFA, where she received a Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy of Music Education (2009) and a Master's degree in Media Music Editing (2010). During her doctoral studies she passed all the necessary exams, she performed within four years the six concerts (2017-2021) required by the specifics of the major (artistic doctoral studies). There are three scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation: two in the Yearbook of AMDFA (2017, 2018), one in the Collection "Spring Scientific Readings" (2019). Along with the academic preparation and activities related to the topic of the dissertation, Denitsa Vasileva has significant creative and pedagogical achievements and practices: she was a teacher of folk singing at National School of Music and Dance "Dobrin Petkov", Plovdiv (2013-2017), host of a show for folk music on Radio Plovdiv (2014-2015), soloist of folklore and ethno-formation (since 2014), part-time lecturer in folk singing at AMDFA "Prof. Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv (currently).

About the dissertation text and its qualities

The main part of the artistic doctoral studies is the dissertation *The Bulgarian Folk Song and its Contemporary Interpretation*, with a total of 121 pages (scientific text - 116 pages). The scientific literature used includes 79 titles in Cyrillic. The dissertation also includes an audiovisual part (6 DVDs with concerts).

The work is structured in an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion.

The introduction presents the object and subject of the research, outlines the objective and the scientific tasks, an overview ("literature review") of most of the research on the topic and a critical

review of the sources. The contents of the chapters in the dissertation are summarized, the main methods in the work are indicated.

The first chapter, entitled "The folk song as an object of scientific research", includes five parts: "Recorded authentic samples - a fixed image of the ancient interpretation", "Classification of Bulgarian folk songs - a theoretical interpretation of performing authenticity", "Laments - an authentic form of "Modern" improvisation", "Melody - the adaptive "conservative" element of the folk song" and "Summary". Vasileva has tried to present the dimensions of the folk song in time through the above accents: during the millennia of the premodern oral tradition - of group identity and memory, and of personal and creative expression; in the modern times after the Revival - the folk song as written and sound recorded, distributed and researched, and as a stage realization of processed samples and author's works.

The second chapter "The role of institutions for the development of folk songs" describes and analyzes the institutional factors in three directions: "Radio - a factor in transforming folk music"; "Folk song and dance ensembles - a kind of engine in evolutionary processes" and "Schools - the other reading of folk songs." The chapter ends with "Summaries".

The third chapter, entitled "Modern factors contributing to the development of folk song", looks for the causes and agents of the development of folk song beyond the institutionalized units. Vasileva finds them in the face of "the performers themselves - singers or instrumentalists, who put in the songs their creative invention and response to the tastes of modernity". The structure of the chapter contains the accents placed by the author: "wedding orchestras, new forms of collaboration with other musical styles and convincing contemporary interpretations by the singers". The chapter ends with a Summary.

The conclusion presents the main conclusions of the work *The Bulgarian folk song and its contemporary interpretation*, already made in the final parts of the three chapters of the theoretical work. The conclusion also contains the most important results of the artistic and creative part of doctoral studies - "six concerts that trace the development of the folk song and the ways of its modern presentation", which, according to the author, as stage performances "are a public demonstration of different interpretations of the folk song ". In the first concert Vasileva offers performances of original songs based on folklore. The second concert presents "the modern image of the folk song through the unusual combination of folk and classical musical instruments, by combining folklore from different regions of Bulgaria with pop and jazz elements". The third is dedicated to "emblematic songs of old masters from different folklore regions of Bulgaria processed and modernized through new arrangements." The fourth concert, called "Lyrical Choral Masterpieces", presents with the participation of the Academic Folk Choir at AMDFA Prof Asen Diamandiev choral works by famous composers in order to demonstrate the singing abilities of the doctoral student as a soloist and as a

member of choir. The fifth concert is dedicated to the influence of wedding orchestras on folk songs and includes "some of the most popular songs performed by doyens in wedding music". The sixth concert is a demonstration of the change in the traditional sound of the folk song, presented only with keyboard accompaniment.

The abstract (50 pages) presents the structure and main points in the dissertation, artistic and creative part, bibliography. It includes a self-report on scientific contributions and a list of publications on the topic of the dissertation (3), which cover the minimum national requirements.

Contributions of the dissertation research

Denitsa Vasileva lists the contributions of her work in eight paragraphs. I accept almost all of the contributions formulated in this way, which I summarize in three groups:

1). The theoretical part is based on numerous and different sources to derive the stages of development of the folk song and to systematize the factors influencing the development processes. The point of view is internal, of an "active vocal performer" who studies both the song and singing, as well as the instrumental accompaniment and its influence on the development of the folk song, the role in the transformations of the folk song to instrumental accompaniment in other genres (pop, jazz, ethnofolk jazz, etc.).

2). The research focuses on the individual interpretations of the folk song in some folklore pieces. For the first time, an attempt is made to summarize the contribution of the folk singers on the overall development of the song.

3). Artistic and creative development is focused on the interpretation of folk songs. It is related to the theoretical presentation of modern interpretive directions in the stage transformation of folk songs, vocally illustrated by the doctoral candidate.

To these contributions I can add a few more: the research has the qualities of relevance and applicability, it enriches the knowledge not only in applied science and educational practice related to traditional music, but also in the historical readings of the folk songs and the singers as part of the study of traditional music in modern times. It analyzes the processes that take place at the moment and in which the author is participating. It reflects the Bulgarian practices in the dynamics of the processes through diachronic analysis of a complex of many different synchronous and asynchronous sources, an important part of which is the candidate's own performing, artistic and teaching practice. The author has the necessary bibliographic awareness; her conclusions are based on rich reliable sources, she illustrates her analyzes with musical examples and confirms and presents them creatively in a highly regarded series of concerts.

Remarks and recommendations

The quality of the presented scientific work would have been higher with a more critical selection of the sources and more precise editorial and stylistic work. In the first chapter, for example,

the statement that "the most representative figure of the Bulgarian folklore in the early 20th century is considered Mikhail Arnaudov" is supported by one of his works ("in 1913 he published his work "Folklore from Elena region") – while in fact, at the beginning of the 20th century such a figure was Ivan Shishmanov, and Arnaudov, his student, was an iconic scientist who continued to work in the second half of the twentieth century. Although enclosed in quotation marks, the word in the title of the third chapter "Modern" factors is misleading - there are more appropriate terms and concepts for the processes described in the chapter related to transformations and modernization processes. The introduced examples of famous folk songs with authorial contributions are interesting, but not developed and critically argued. For example, the version about the authorship of the song *Danyova Mama*, which the author mentions, uncritically accepts the thesis of a journalistic publication, that it is "created the folk singer Maria Baltadzhieva" – there is other evidence that the song was neither "created" nor recorded first by this singer. The example with Verka Siderova's version of *Are You a Tulip* as "the combination of different songs into a complete work" is also not substantiated, especially with the claim of borrowing the chorus of *Ah Yano, You Black-Eyed Girl*. The bibliography can be enriched with more up-to-date titles and refined.

Conclusion

The remarks made by me do not reduce the positive assessment of the work. The dissertation of Denitsa Vasileva *The Bulgarian Folk Song and its Modern Interpretation* has contributive value according to the indicators of scientific activity specified in the Law for the development of the academic staff in Republic of Bulgaria, explores important scientific and applied issues, further develops and enriches existing knowledge in Bulgarian musical folklore. It meets the requirements of LDASRB and the regulations of its implementation regarding the awarding the educational and scientific degree Doctor in Music and Dance Art. My assessment of the work is positive, I am voting for the award of Doctoral degree to Denitsa Dimitrova Vasileva.

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Prof Ventsislav Dimov, PhD