

## REVIEW

by **Vessela Ivanova Geleva, PhD** – professor in Choral Conducting at the Department of Music Pedagogy and Conducting, Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts “Prof. Asen Diamandiev” Plovdiv.

for **Dian Borislavov Chobanov** – candidate for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”, field of higher education 8. Arts; professional field 8.3 Music and dance art /Order of the Rector of AMDFA “Prof. Asen Diamandiev ” No RD27-074 dated 24.11.2020/.

Dian Chobanov was born in Plovdiv, where he graduated with honours from National High School of Music “Dobrin Petkov” with a degree in piano. Then a degree in conducting at the National Academy of Music “Prof Pancho Vladigerov”, Sofia in the class of Prof V. Kazandzhiev, and the University of Music and Fine Arts in Vienna in the class of Prof U. Lajovic. His career is related to his work as conductor of the Schönbrunn Chamber Orchestra in Vienna, Sofia Philharmonic, State Opera Stara Zagora, the Croatian Chamber Orchestra and the Croatian National Opera in Zagreb, and since 2013 he has been the music director of the Plovdiv State Opera.

Dian Chobanov has performed with great success in a number of European countries, as well as in Israel, the United States, Brazil and China. He has conducted the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Arena di Verona Orchestra, the Budapest Festival Orchestra, and the Baden-Baden Philharmonic; Meiningen State Theatre, Macedonian Opera and Ballet-Skopje; Bach Chamber Orchestra Ekaterinburg – Russia, Serbian National Opera - Belgrade and many others. His academic activities include working as a teacher of conducting and opera practice at the summer academies of Varna International. In 2009 holds a master class in conducting at the University of South Carolina, USA, and in 2012 becomes visiting professor at East China Normal University, Shanghai, China.

Dian Chobanov participates in a number of prestigious music festivals in Germany, Austria, Croatia, Israel, Italy, Russia and others. He has received awards from international competitions for conductors in France, Italy, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kazakhstan and others. He is the winner of the Plovdiv Award for 2015.

The impressive stage career of the candidate logically determines his choice for the type of doctorate: artistic, which by law requires two components: significant artistic achievements, united by a single idea, which represent a contribution to national and/ or international music culture, and a research, thematically related to the creative idea of stage performances.

The dissertation work titled “Detailed analysis and detailed structuring of the architecture of the musical form in the work of the conductor with the score” consists of 75 pages and is structured in an introduction, three chapters with examples, summaries and conclusions, contributions of the

dissertation, 3 publications on the topic in the collection *Spring Scientific Readings* of AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev” and bibliography of 20 titles in German and English.

The Introduction presents the purpose of the research – to introduce and use innovative analytical methods in the work of the conductor on the score, which will help for optimal understanding and hence - structuring the musical matter. The expected result is the most objective and detailed reproduction of the musical process and its specifics. The perception of musical art as multicomponent, i.e. combining temporal and spatial projection, and leading to new dimensions of the interpretation of the musical object. In this regard, the doctoral student justifies the need for a binary multilayer analytical method that allows a fuller understanding of the laws of musical proportionality, clearer and more detailed structuring of musical matter at micro and macro levels and more convincing and objective interpretation of the musical form.

The first chapter titled *Music and Spatiality* discusses the correlation of music with philosophy, mathematics and architecture. In the search for the spatial qualities of the musical experience, the author seeks opportunities to view music as a vibrating sculpture, a sounding volume. To this end, he refers to a wide range of literary sources – from mythology to the latest scientific achievements: Pythagoras (the theory of proportions and the monochord), Plato (perception of the cosmos as a harmony of numbers, whose convincing expression is music; Timaeus' progression and the establishment of harmonic numerical relations applicable in the art of music), Vitruvius (for the validity of mathematical proportions in architecture and music), Alberti (for the equality of architecture and music), Schelling (music in plastic is architecture), Le Corbusier (architecture as “frozen music”), etc.

The second chapter *Methodology of musical microanalysis* has two subsections. The first (Binary Code) briefly presents the history of the binary system from Leibniz to the present day and its similar variants in music. According to the candidate, the ratios of the building blocks of a musical whole, regardless of their scale, can be expressed by binary ratios at the micro and macro levels. Dyads in aesthetics and philosophy are examples of such thinking, and in music they are defined by Schoenberg (centrifugality and centripetalism) and Webern (“strict” and “loose”). Functional interpretation of the form in its organicity, and not normatively in terms of standard external features, was substantiated by the Austrian musicologist Erwin Ratz. He also uses the term *Ur-form* (protoform) the meaning of which is confirmed in the dissertation.

The second subsection "Binary Analysis" presents a scientific method for binary deduction and induction of musical matter, illustrated with popular examples from the music literature in order to prove its universality. The spatiality of music is proven by the same method, which allows for detailed structuring of elements of more complex musical expressions not only horizontally but also vertically, which Chobanov defines as "virtual polyphony". In the study of the multiplicity of musical-spatial dimensions, he expanded his search and drew a parallel between music and the science of volumetric bodies, namely multidimensional geometry. In the field of human sensory perception of music as a

vector, linear process, the doctoral student theoretically does not exclude the possibility that it has the qualities of a complex and multidimensional one. In the analysed examples (J. S. Bach, *Harpsichord Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052*, BWV 1052, first part - theme and Verdi's *La Traviata* – Prelude to the First Act) proves the need for detailed knowledge of the building blocks of the musical opus, whose deciphered abstraction can become a key for the conductor to understand the complex musical process.

The last, Third Chapter of the dissertation examines the nature and significance of the musical transition, its proportions and its specificity in the Viennese Classicism. Typical of this important, in structural and formative sense, part of the musical process is the redirection and transformation of musical energy, strong instability and the restoration of balance into a single whole. The candidate presents the main problems for the conductor in the transition until Maelzel invents the metronome and the refinement of the tempo markings.

Chobanov examines the unwritten tempo and proportional specifics of the Viennese Classicism and the concepts of their most prominent researchers – Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Helmut Breidenstein, Simon Sechter, Josef Riepl, Koch and others. The third chapter also analyzes the main traditional tempo and metric proportions inherited from the Renaissance and their evolution to the full stabilization of the note values in the Baroque.

The object of the last subsection of the dissertation is the tempo and proportional conducting analysis, illustrated with examples from the works of Mozart (finals of the operas *Così fan tutte* and *Don Juan, Requiem*), Brahms (*Variations on a theme by Haydn*), Schubert (Symphony No), Offenbach (*The Tales of Hoffmann*), etc. The candidate refers to the authority of Harnoncourt and Lajovic, sharing his personal rich experience in conducting this repertoire. Through a detailed analysis of the works included in the concerts for the performing part of the doctoral dissertation, he presents a streamlined methodology for effective analytical work of the conductor on the score, guaranteeing a good basis for a successful rehearsal and concert process.

In respect with the contributions of the dissertation, we should mention the following:

- It offers an innovative analytical method for structuring and interpreting the musical form.
- Through binary the musical form can be clearly analyzed and structured, starting from a two-bar (sometimes half-bar or two adjacent notes) and reaching the work in its entirety, passing through all intermediate micro and macro sizes of the formal elements. This theoretical statement is proved and substantiated by the examples included in the dissertation.
- The search for the multidimensional musical picture presupposes the consideration of music as a process with many different coordinates. The study advocates the idea of poly-spatiality, which in turn requires a new stage in the development of musical senses, thinking and emotionality. Such an idea enriches the possibilities for interpretation and perception.
- In particular, the work contributes to clarifying the problem of the musical transition and its credible interpretation by the conductor. The analysis of the tempo and tempo proportions, the ratios

of the segments in the whole and the logic of the time process in the context of the respective style and epoch are extremely important for any interpreter.

Reviewing the concert performances of Maestro Dian Chobanov for the indicated period (2016-2020), it should be pointed out that they are impressive with their volume and quality and present a rich palette of genres, styles and authors. I have attended most of his performances and I would like to highlight the performances of *Swan Lake*, *Tales of Hoffmann* (2016), *The Power of Fate* and *Turandot* (2017), *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* and *Othello* (2018), *A Survivor from Warsaw* and Beethoven's *Symphony No 9* (2019), the multimedia projects *The Doors of Dream* and *The Fire/ The Feast*, within the Opera Open Festival of the Ancient Theatre, Plovdiv, *Symphony 7, Leningrad* (2020). The high artistic level of the production of the Plovdiv State Opera has been duly appreciated by the audience and the music critics, and the interest of the audience in the classical musical works has been on the rise in recent years.

My personal impressions of Dian Chobanov are related to professional collaboration and direct communication. He is an extremely tolerant and ethical person with a high degree of professional motivation and personal responsibility - qualities that make him a valuable colleague and successful leader of a creative team.

In conclusion, I will note that the materials provided under the procedure prove indisputable achievements in the artistic and scientific career of the candidate. They present a realized concert practice at a high professional and artistic level and in-depth theoretical research, which scientifically analyzes in an original and innovative way the problems of the musical form and its interpretation. Considering all of the above, I strongly suggest to the esteemed scientific jury to award him the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 8. Arts; professional field 8.3 Music and dance art.

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