

OPINION

by

Prof Ermila Schweitzer, PhD

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on the dissertation of

Elvira Todorova Mateva

doctoral student individual form studies

doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

at the Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performing Arts

at AMDFA, “Prof Asen Diamandiev” - Plovdiv,

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titled

Chamber-vocal cycle *Songs and Dances of Death* by Modest Mussorgsky - genesis and development of the medieval macabre plots in the context of the sonority-intonation relation

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

in Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

On the grounds of a decision of the Faculty Council at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy dated 28.02.2024, to open a procedure for the defense of the dissertation work of Elvira Mateva, I was provided with the following materials: CV of the candidate, dissertation work, abstract, a reference to the contribution nature of the dissertation, list of publications on the topic.

Brief biographical data: Elvira Mateva is born in 1968. In 1993 she completed her major in Instrumental Art - Piano at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" Plovdiv and since 1994 she has been a teacher of chamber music and interpretation, and an accompanist for vocal classes at the same Academy. She works actively as concert accompanist and chamber musician. She is the winner of a number of awards: Diploma for High Pedagogical Achievements at the 8th National Academic Competition "J. S. Bach and his contemporaries" – AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" (2021); Diploma for high artistic accompaniment from at the 8th National Academic Competition "J. S. Bach and his contemporaries" – AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" (2021); - Diploma for highly artistic accompaniment - Fifth International Competition for Chamber Music and Individual Artists "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Art Borovets Festival (2021), etc. She is a participant in numerous national and international projects.

The work is relevant with its subject and complements factual and analytical material in musicology, as well as offers practical-cognitive guidelines in building a performance concept for the chamber-vocal cycle *Songs and Dances of Death* by Modest Mussorgsky.

The research methods include analysis and synthesis of the available scientific research information, historical-chronological and comparative-analytical method in relation to the medieval plots *Danse Macabre* and *The Triumph of Death*, as well as an analysis of the musical-technical and conceptual-image means of the *Songs and Dances of Death* cycle.

The dissertation is 196 pages, structured in an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography (61 titles and 24 Internet sources) and appendices.

In the **introduction**, the author justifies the choice of the topic of the dissertation, which is related to her professional career as a pianist-accompanist. I find very original the idea of tracing in a historical context the development of the macabre plots from the Middle Ages to the present day and transforming them into Mussorgsky's chamber-vocal cycle.

In the **first chapter**, the importance of Modest Mussorgsky in the Russian and the world music is examined in a historical perspective. The author has processed and synthesized a huge amount of facts about the musical culture in Russia in the early and mid-19th century, the appearance, development and creative views of the composers of the Mighty Five, as well as the life and artistic work of Mussorgsky.

In the **second chapter**, Mateva makes a cultural-historical study of the medieval macabre plots, which, according to historians and medievalist researchers, originate from the Roman *memento mori*, goes through the era of early Christianity, the Middle Ages and the emergence of the *Danse Macabre* stylistic direction with its two main plots: *Three Living and the Three Dead* and *The Triumph of Death*. In a very synthesized discourse, the author examines chronologically the macabre aesthetics in visual arts, literature and music.

The **third chapter** is devoted to an in-depth analysis of the cycle *Songs and Dances of Death*, which the author defines as the "*philosophical culmination of Mussorgsky's chamber work*" (p.81), and is central to the entire dissertation. The history of the creation of the cycle is traced, the biography of the author of the poetic text - Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov, is presented, followed by a detailed musical-structural and performance analysis of the four songs of the cycle.

The **conclusion** contains a summary of the research and the contributing points in the text.

There are five contributions of the dissertation that I fully support.

The doctoral student has two scientific publications on the subject. The abstract, in a volume of 45 pages, corresponds to the content of the thesis.

Elvira Mateva's dissertation is a thorough scientific study, both in terms of the problem under consideration and in terms of its analysis and the conclusions drawn. From the presented text it is clear that Elvira Mateva is an erudite musician, with rich musical-theoretical training and active accompanist practice. I congratulate the author and her scientific supervisor - Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak, and I confidently propose to the respected Scientific Jury to award Elvira Mateva the scientific educational degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

Sofia, 15.09.2024

Prof Ermila Schweitzer