

## OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Nadezhda Kozma Kuzmanova

- teacher of piano and chamber music in AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv  
of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR"

by professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

the Department of Piano and Accordion at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev"-Plovdiv

with author Evgeniya Petrova Tagareva

and dissertation topic

***Specificity of the piano training methodology for persons with special educational needs***

Academic supervisor: Prof Snezhana Simeonova

### **1. General presentation of the procedure and the materials presented for review**

By order No RD 27-094 / 25.06.2024 of the Rector of AMDFA "Prof. Asen Diamandiev" for the appointment of a scientific jury and presenting the necessary materials – curriculum vitae, order for enrolling the doctoral student, order for discharge, dissertation work and abstract – the public defense of doctoral student Evgeniya Tagareva was initiated, with the topic of the scientific research *Specificity of the piano training methodology for persons with special educational needs* and scientific supervisor Prof. Snezhana Simeonova.

### **2. Brief biographical data of the candidate**

Evgeniya Petrova Tagareva completed her musical education at AMDFA, Plovdiv in 1989 with the majors in teaching piano, music and aesthetics. In 1993, she completed a one-year postgraduate specialization, and in the period 30.11.2016 - 16.12.2019 she completed a full-time doctoral course at AMDFA, Plovdiv. Two activities stand out in her professional life – piano teacher and literature projects. She has published three independent books of poetry, numerous publications of poems – including in German, Polish and English, as well as translations from Serbian and Polish. Winner of the Grand Prize of the International Poetry Festival "Spirituality Without Borders" (2021). Her work with music includes the creation of author's music for piano published in the collection *Sounds from Infinity* (2019) and teaching work – directly related to the topic her scientific research, which makes it particularly important and significant in a practical aspect.

### **3. Relevance of the topic:**

In recent decades, the number of children with SEN has been increasing. This also leads to the need to change the thinking and attitude of society towards people with limited opportunities. Much of

the scientific research on the subject worldwide describes partially achieved results within the framework of individual teaching practice. In most of them, teachers share the inadequacy of their professional training, which reveals the need for a new, more detailed look through the prism of inclusive education and the entry of more modern technologies into education. These directions of thinking and research are developed in the present study through generalization and new ideas and fully prove the relevance of the topic in the context of modern pedagogy.

#### **4. Expedience of the research methods:**

Defending her research thesis, namely "*Piano training can be successfully applied to people with SEN and lead to results in various aspects of their development*", the candidate successfully uses two main methods: analytical – to investigate existing theories and practices in the field of research and empirical – conducting a finding study on a group of students with SEN.

#### **5. Evaluation of the dissertation work:**

The **introduction** meets the standard requirements for the presentation of the subject, object, purpose of the scientific work and the resulting tasks and methods used. It also presents Tagareva's motivation to expand the existing generalizations and supplement them with her own methodical guidelines derived from the piano training of children with various disorders in a private piano school.

The **first chapter** presents an overview of the existing literature on the subject of the dissertation, discussing the current state of piano training for persons with SEN in different countries of the world, leading authors in the field of music and special pedagogy, research in the field of medicine and psychology, the use of modern technologies and ideas from new scientific fields such as art pedagogy and art therapy. This comprehensive review leads to the conclusion that there is a lack of research related to the practical side of teaching piano to people with SEN.

The **second chapter** takes us to the description of the pedagogical experiment carried out by the doctoral student over a period of 16 years and involving more than 20 children and young people. Conditionally, the trainees are divided into two groups – with sensory disorders and with mental and motor difficulties. A key point for the pedagogical progress is the knowledge of the deficit and the compensatory mechanism, as well as the personal teacher-student contact.

The **third chapter** takes in account the importance of the correct definition of the deficits and the construction of compensatory factors at the physiological and psycho-emotional level. Tagareva points out that various disabilities cause delays in the overall development of the individual or so-called secondary deviations – uncertainty in spatial orientation and reduction of motor activity, etc. By playing the piano, one achieves concentration, synchronizing the work of the brain and muscles, as well as improving speech and communication. The author offers her 4-step scheme for mastering notation with a transition from speaking to singing and playing.

The **fourth chapter** examines the piano education of students with sensory disabilities – blind and hearing-impaired. The doctoral student presents the different stages of mastering the musical

elements in both groups and offers us her own specific solutions – exercises for spatial orientation, exercises for positional placement of hands, creating audio recordings, exercises with changing strokes, visualizing with a color marker, using gestures, facial expressions, electronic devices, etc.

The **fifth chapter** introduces us to E. Tagareva's beginner's piano textbook "Piano Art" in audio format, intended for blind and partially sighted students and their teachers. The guide contains two main sections: 10 audio lessons and pieces and duets for beginners. The audio lessons include basic theoretical knowledge about music and the piano, as well as practical exercises with specific sheet music. All pieces are recorded with singing and playing the tone names and fingering. The second section "Piano Pieces and Duets" contains instructional material presented in complete form as audio and sheet music. The duets are designed for teacher and student. I consider the created aid to be an outstanding practical contribution to the course for teaching blind students.

The **sixth chapter** deals with the piano training of students with mental and motor problems. Unlike the other cited authors, the author describes and systematizes her own practice in this field. Most damages and inhibitions in the functioning of the brain affect its motor centers. An important factor in the correct selection of methods and means of work is the approximate determination of the real age of the student. To help solve the deficits, Tagareva suggests marking keys and fingers, showing keys by the teacher, adapting the sheet music.

The **conclusion** summarizes the achieved results and indicates that the present dissertation work is applicable as methodical guidelines for teaching piano to students with SEN and can be a starting point for new scientific-pedagogical experiments in this area.

The sheet music examples illustrating the text are skillfully and accurately selected. The bibliography includes a significant number of used literature from a total of 141 sources. The two appendices complement the practical focus of the dissertation.

## **6. Contributions and significance of the scientific work and the publications on the topic of the dissertation:**

The contributing qualities of the work are accurately listed. The discussed analyzes are reasoned and present the doctoral student as a serious and thorough scientist, with rich theoretical information and detailed knowledge of the practical side of the educational process.

## **7. Critical remarks and recommendations:**

Since the contribution nature of the work is indisputable and enriches the existing pedagogical practice in the field, I recommend its publication in a book that will make it accessible to educators all over the world.

**8. The Abstract** meets the requirements by truthfully and fully presenting the text of the research.

## **9. Conclusion:**

Considering everything said in my review and the indisputable qualities of the work and its author, I express my positive opinion and propose to the respected scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Evgenyia Petrova Tagareva in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art at the "Department of Piano and Accordion, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev"-Plovdiv

14.09.2024  
Plovdiv

Assoc. Prof Nadezhda Kuzmanova