

OPINION

by Prof Ivanka Vlaeva, PhD
Southwest University "Neofit Rilski"

on dissertation work

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art,
doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

to Assoc. Prof Malina Lyubenova Malinova

AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev"

titled *The theme of the mystical love in the piano cycle Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus,*
by Olivier Messiaen,

Academic supervisor Prof Julian Kuyumdzhev

Malina Lyubenova Malinova is a musician with considerable experience and achievements in the field of pedagogy and performing arts. She studied at the Secondary Music School, Plovdiv and graduated with a degree in piano. After that, she continued her education and graduated the Instrumental Faculty of the National Conservatory (now Academy "Prof Pancho Vladigerov"), Sofia. Her long-term teaching work starts at the Musical School, Plovdiv (1981-1984) and after winning a competition in 1984 - at Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. Since 2010, she is an associate professor of piano at the Department of Piano and Accordion at AMDFA. Malina Malinova has performed many concerts and recordings as a soloist and chamber artist in Bulgaria and abroad. Her scientific publications are related to the piano music and music psychology. She has awards for her achievements as performer. Participates in festivals and scientific forums.

The accumulated skills and experience of the doctoral candidate are a very good basis for the successful development of the dissertation. The minimum national scientometric requirements are met. The documentation and materials for the dissertation procedure are complete and sufficient.

The dissertation topic is new and relevant as it presents an important performers problem. The dissertation consists of 222 pages. It is structured into an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography and two appendices. The text also included music sheet examples, tables and figures. There is a list of 86 sources in Latin and Cyrillic.

The introduction justifies the necessity and relevance of the topic of the dissertation. The object and subject of research are clearly formulated. The research goal is precisely defined - analyzing the aspects of "mystical love" as a foundation in the theological concept of Olivier Messiaen and its transformation in his musical work, from which the set tasks and the necessary methodology derive.

The first chapter, *The Beginning of Time*, presents the early creative period of Olivier Messiaen. It outlines in detail and with rich facts the historical context and the creative environment in

which he grew as a musician, his searches, preferences and realizations until the middle of the 20th century. The analysis of the events and the creative environment that influence the creation of a certain type of piano music is important. Special attention is paid to the piano cycle *Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus*, which is the basis for the dissertation.

The Second Chapter of the dissertation *The Light of Faith* analyzes several key issues. It presents the Messiaen's religious concept and the theologians whose ideas influenced it. It also analyses the treatise *The Technique of My Musical Language* of the composer from philosophical-aesthetic and technological-compositional points of view. In the focus of the research is also the composer's synesthesia, as well as its influence on creating a characteristic musical language.

The third chapter *Before the Altar of Mystical Love* is central to the dissertation. It analyzes the aesthetic and religious-philosophical sources that led to the creation of the piano cycle *Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus*. Very valuable here are the observations on the numerological symbolism – key to the configuration and the interpretation of the musically recreated *Contemplations*. A kind of culmination in the research is the analysis of the four main themes in the work and their connection with the *Contemplations*.

The conclusion summarizes important inferences made by the doctoral student in her research work. It confirms the thesis that the *Theme of Mystical Love* is fundamental to the understanding of the ideological meaning and the concept in the piano cycle *Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus*.

The contributions of the dissertation work can be systematized in several directions. It is the first Bulgarian theoretical study on Olivier Messiaen in a religious-philosophical aspect. The dissertation text also analyzes the characteristics of the creative process related to the composer's synesthesia. It is particularly valuable that a multi-faceted and detailed study of the piano cycle *Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus* by Olivier Messiaen is carried out, which is focused on the "theme of mystical love" with its theological interpretations, symbolic meanings and musical language.

The author's abstract truthfully and fully presents the dissertation work. The four publications on the topic of the dissertation are sufficient and bring out important research achievements.

The dissertation is innovative, comprehensive and complete. It shows in-depth knowledge and relevance of the chosen topic, follows the logic in the research and successfully solves the set goals and tasks. Thus, it meets the requirements of the Law on the development of the academic staff of Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation and the minimum national scientometric requirements. It is significant for both theoretical and practical understanding of Olivier Messiaen's piano work through his emblematic works. Therefore, it can be used for a better understanding and performance of the studied works. I acknowledge the relevance and contributions of the dissertation work and I confidently propose to the respected Scientific Jury to award Malina Lyubenova Malinova the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

Sofia, 2 August 2023

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