

REVIEW

by

Prof Katya Gineva Kayryakova, PhD

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on

Dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

Professional field (code 8.3) Music and Dance Art,

Doctoral program Choreography

Author: **Rumyana Vangelova Filkova**, doctoral student at the Department of Choreography

Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts “Prof Asen Diamandiev”

Title: **Specificity in the performance of the maiden ritual songs and dance practices in some settlements of Southwestern Bulgaria**

Academic supervisor: Prof Daniela Dzheneva, PhD

General presentation of the procedure and the materials presented for review

This review is prepared on the grounds of Order RD-27-059/ 15.04.2024 of the Rector of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv, regarding the approval of a scientific jury and presented by the doctoral candidate a dissertation, an abstract, a report on the contributions of the dissertation, publications on the topic of the dissertation, meeting the requirements of Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), and the Regulations for its implementation, for obtaining educational and scientific degree “doctor” and scientific degree “doctor of sciences”. On the basis of the submitted documents, there is every reason to conclude that the procedure for announcing and conducting the competition was carried out in full compliance with the DASRBA, and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as with the internal Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions in AMDFA.

The candidate Rumyana Vangelova Filkova has submitted for review:

- ✓ Dissertation work consisting of 174 pages with the following structure: introduction, exposition in three chapters, conclusion, reference to contributions and bibliography. The use of the standards and classical structure of this type of work can be accepted as a good statement of the doctoral student for mastered basic skills and norms in scientific the stylistics. The bibliographic reference includes 126 titles in Cyrillic - both from recent years and titles of some of the first authors on the subject of the dissertation and 30 names of respondents. The useful conclusions of the study show convincingly the skillful handling of the different types of sources. Evidence of knowledge of the topic is also the selected interviews and

conversations illustrating the main moments of the dissertation work. The content of each of the three chapters is separated into paragraphs;

- ✓ Four publications on the topic of the dissertation work in academic publications;
- ✓ An **abstract** of 49 pages, prepared in accordance with the academic requirements, which analytically presents the main moments in the dissertation work and reflects its volume correctly and accurately - both in terms of content side and the conclusions and scientific contributions made.

Brief biographical data of the candidate

The biography and professional path of the author of the dissertation work, Rumyana Vangelova Filkova, definitely suggests the orientation to the researched topic related to the specifics in the performance of the maiden ritual songs and dance practices in the settlements of the Southwestern part of Bulgaria. Born in Blagoevgrad, from an early age she immersed herself in the atmosphere of the local folklore, and this has determined her education and career. Having gone through the school of accordion and folk singing and solfeggio at the Centre for Work with Children in the Varosha district, she continued her studies at the secondary music school in the village of Shiroka Laka. Her educational path passes through the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv with a Bachelor's degree in Instrumental Art - Folk Singing, two postgraduate qualifications in the specialty Pedagogy of Music Education and Bulgarian Folk Choreography and a Master's degree in Performing Art - Folk Singing. Her training continues in the doctoral program Choreography, and by Order No RD-27-030 of 15.06.2020, she was assigned as a doctoral student, individual studies, in the Department of Choreography at the Faculty of Music Folklore and Choreography of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" with the right to public defense of a dissertation work. While still a student, she started working in the folklore ensemble Trakia as a folk singer, where she continues to this day. Her outstanding talent makes her an undisputed soloist in all more significant performances of the ensemble and numerous sound recordings made at the Bulgarian National Radio, Radio-Television Centre - Blagoevgrad, participation in television shows of the Bulgarian National Television. Over the years, Rumyana Filkova's professional path also goes through pedagogical activity as a part-time teacher of folk singing and pedagogical practice at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" and National School of Music and Dance "Dobrin Petkov" - Plovdiv. The professional career of the doctoral candidate Rumyana Filkova combines her work as a performer, teacher and artist, which allows for a kind of "inside" view and makes the present study particularly valuable from the point of view of accumulated many years of practical experience and competences.

Relevance of the topic

The dissertation work *Specificity in the performance of the maiden ritual songs and dance practices in some settlements of Southwestern Bulgaria* is a valuable text in its essence, which represents a comprehensive study related to the discovery of new and unexplored sides of the song-dance tradition and the singing performance art related with the maiden initiation from the villages of

Dobarsko, Igralishte, Nikodin and Pirin. The set significant goal formulates a very serious and in-depth study, which includes two particularly significant research directions - the first - characterization of the specific features in the performance of the maiden ritual songs and dancing practices from the studied settlements and the second - in concretizing the meaning of the customary-ritual system in the studied villages as an inexhaustible source of themes and ideas with applied artistic value in contemporary music and dance art.

Expediency of the research methods used to achieve the set goals

Filkova defines the objective of her dissertation in the presentation of "*...a comprehensive study and analysis of the specifics in the performance of maiden ritual songs and dance practices from the studied settlements*" /p. 5/. Six specific research tasks arise from this objective, the implementation of which is carried out sequentially in the main text. The chosen methods are adequate to the set goals in the presentation of a complex study. The author relies on theoretical studies of the Bulgarian folklore, ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology with the use of empirical data from regional and local studies. The dissertation material is also based on personally collected material, the result of many years of field research, in which qualitative methods such as free interviews, surveys, and external observation are mainly used. In relation to the research goals and tasks, appropriate methods and tools are applied: observation, interview, comparative analysis, classification and summary, and the doctoral student shows the ability to present her ideas in an analytical form.

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Evaluation of the dissertation work

The **introduction** substantiates the relevance of the topic with the need for a complete local study and a complex study of the customary-ritual song-dance tradition, the connection with the dramaturgy in the custom and the stylistic specifics in the singing performance art, which gives a proper place of the Pirin region in the Bulgarian folk culture. The doctoral student Rumiana Vangelova Filkova presents her reasons for choosing the topic, outlines the direction of the research, its goals, tasks and methodology. The text states the object and the subject of the research, as well as the author's thesis that the Pirin region with its distinct folklore areas stands out with its distinctive specificity and features in the customary-ritual song-dance tradition and stylistic specifics in the singing performance art.

The **first chapter** presents an in-depth reading of theoretical studies and achieved scientific results with an emphasis on their relevance to the topic of the dissertation work. In the context of the present study, the works of a large number of scientists related to traditional rites and specifically to the ritual practices in the Voditsi, Lazaruvane and Easter customs have been examined. The author takes the point of view presented in them as a serious foundation that enables a thorough understanding of the folklore tradition in the studied region. The achieved scientific results form the

views of the doctoral student and support and help the upcoming analyses.

The **second chapter** outlines the conceptual field of the characteristic features of music and dance folklore in Southwestern Bulgaria. The historical-geographical and ethnological characterization of the researched region made in the first paragraph substantiates the demographic processes that have taken place, which have an impact on the spiritual communication and folk culture of this region. The emphasis in the second paragraph of the exposition is placed on the specificity of the two-voice singing as the most distinctive feature of the song folklore tradition of the studied area. The doctoral student precisely delineates the distinct regions and sub-regions and focuses her attention on the interaction and interweaving of the local with the regional specifics and features that emphasize the variety and diversity of the song folklore of this region. She indicates the melodic features of the songs, the specifics of the traditional two-voice, and the characteristic features of the performance style. The next section is discusses the local dance tradition studied by the author. The characterization of the dances leads to the conclusion that "*The dances in Southwestern Bulgaria are characterized by common stylistic features that distinguish them from the dances in other ethnographic areas. At the same time, they also have differences between them, related to the influence of – Shopluka, the Rhodopes, Thrace and the imported refugee dance folklore.*" /p.24/

I would define the **third chapter** *Specificity in the musical-performance style and dance practices of the maiden customs* as a serious contribution of the dissertation. As a result of the doctoral student's field work, the characteristic three customs **Voditsi, Lazaruvane and Easter** related to the maiden initiation from the villages of Dobarsko, Igralishte, Nikudin and Pirin are presented.

The village of Dobarsko is the only place in the Pirin region where the Voditsi custom is found, which occupied an extremely important place in people's lives. The characteristic **musical features** of the *voditsi* songs and the peculiarities in the **manner** of performance are consistently and logically presented. The ritual dances are examined as a way of performance, form, direction of movement, grips. The exposition continues with an emphasis on the research study on the **Lazaruvane cycle from the village of Igralishte**. After a detailed chronological analysis of the custom and the songs accompanying it, Filkova concludes that the typical for the entire region marks of ritual songs and a characteristic manner of singing exist here as well, and the distinguishing mark from the generally accepted course of the custom is the beginning with going to the cemetery first. The ritual ring dances, are discussed here as a way of performance, form, direction of movement and grip, represent models of ancient female, ritual danceability.

The next section is dedicated to one of the biggest and most significant spring customs, **Easter**, researched in the villages of Nikudin and Igralishte. The close distance between the two villages and the small differences in the ritual singing and the characteristic dances established during the fieldwork focused the research on the celebration in the village of Nikudin.

A highlight in the subsequent part of the exposition is an analysis of the **Lazaruvane** custom from the village of Pirin, which arouses research interest with an exceptional music and dance culture.

The analyzed songs and dances prove the existence of a rich tradition, bearing in itself the distinctive marks of this settlement.

In the analyzes of the customs from the specific settlements, I would like to point out the fact, which for me is of very essential importance – the descriptive part characterizes the essence of the content part, and at the same time it is the basis on which the conclusions are built, when searching for song and dance characteristics of the investigated customs that have undergone the inevitable transformation and direction over the years. On the other hand, the author, starting from the larger phenomenon, I mean the custom, directs her attention to the more concrete - the songs, the manner of performance, the ring dances and the games, classifying and analyzing them according to certain signs.

In the **conclusion**, as a natural ending of the study, the candidate summarizes the presented in the individual chapters and the conclusions drawn at the end of each of them.

Contributions and significance of the thesis and the publications on the subject of the dissertation

The listed contributions correctly reflect the results achieved by the author. Respondents from whom the author received information on the topics of interest are indicated by settlement. The rich volume of the described examples are a good basis for creating new musical and dance works. The reviewed dissertation work has serious scientific value and meets the requirements of the DASRBA and the regulations for its implementation.

The doctoral candidate has indicated four publications on the topic of the dissertation. The publications made in terms of number and content fully meet the requirements for admission to public defense.

I recommend that the work be published in a practical manual intended for specialists in the field of folk music and dance art.

Conclusion

In view of everything mentioned above, I hereby give my positive assessment of the dissertation *Specificity in the performance of the maiden ritual songs and dance practices in some settlements of Southwestern Bulgaria*, and propose to the respected scientific jury that RUMYANA Vangelova Filkova be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Choreography.

25 May 2024

Varna

Kayryakova

Reviewer:

Assoc.

Prof

Katya