

REVIEW

by Prof Svetla Georgieva Kaludova-Stanilova, PhD

AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev”- Plovdiv

On: Theoretical work and concerts part of doctoral thesis for awarding

educational and scientific degree *Doctor*,

Professional field (code 8.3): Music and dance art, Scientific specialty Musicology and music art

Author: Vanya Simeonova Moneva, doctoral candidate at the Department of Music Folklore at the

Faculty of Music Folklore and Choreography, AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev”- Plovdiv

Title: Contemporary interpretations of songs for female folk choir

Academic supervisor: Prof. Dr. Kostadin Mihaylov Buradjiev

Information on the competition procedure

In the competition for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the Field of higher education 8. Arts, Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art for the needs of the Department of Music Folklore at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" there is one candidate – Vanya Moneva. All necessary documents according to the Law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria are presented.

Presentation of the candidate

Vanya Moneva is born in Veliko Tarnovo. Music has been her vocation since childhood. After completing secondary music education in Ruse, she is admitted at to the National Music Academy “Pancho Vladigerov” to study choral conducting in the class of Prof Vasil Arnaudov. Meeting him predetermines her career. “*Until the project of my life – the choir with the new name "Vanya Moneva"*”, (as the candidate puts it) she is the conductor of a number of prominent choirs in Bulgaria: the Cosmic Voices of Bulgaria, the Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices, the Female Folk Choir of the Bulgarian National Radio, choir “Aleko Konstantinov”, etc. For 28 years now, she has been manager of Vanya Moneva Choir. With the interpretation of scores by leading names in the genre *Songs for Folk Choir*, she demonstrates “*her creative potential and deep knowledge in the field of choir-conducting mastery*”. Her worldwide achievements as a choir conductor are remarkable, she has numerous artistic performances at international festivals, choir competitions, and participation in projects, film music and a numerous performances at local music forums. Along with her work as conductor, a very important part of her artistic biography is also her pedagogical work. For this she enjoys public recognition and has won many prestigious music awards: *Crystal Necklace* and *Crystal Lyre* of the Union of Bulgarian Musicians and Dancers; *Golden Stave* of the Union of Bulgarian Composers, *Musician of the Year* and many other iconic awards.

Scientific and artistic production

At a glance Vanya Moneva's creative biography reveals a musician with a broad view and innovative approach in the field of choral art. Conductor who integrates in her work various elements of her talent: creative initiative, insight, high level of specialized musical culture and knowledge, organizational skills and inexhaustible energy. Apparently, the candidate's interest in the art of conducting, the peculiarities of interpretation and the search for a new approach to the polyphonic folklore texture, has determined her participation in this procedure and her choice of topic for the dissertation. Many years of experience on stage and in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge are an additional prerequisite to analyze and systematize the most important aspects in the interpretation of the choral score – its artistic transformation.

The presented thesis for theoretical research of the artistic doctoral dissertation titled *Contemporary interpretations of songs for female folk choir* contains an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, list of used literature and an appendix of a total of 107 pages. The bibliography includes 150 sources, which demonstrates the candidate's knowledge on the topic in the study. At the beginning of the work, the motivation for choosing a topic is clearly and precisely emphasized. The object, the subject, the goal and the tasks are convincingly presented. The text is well structured, with a clear and logical statement, with accurate conclusions and personal opinions based on her choral practice. This work is a conscious attempt to accurately analyze the problems of working with a folk choir from its organization through the vocal-stage requirements, style specifics and interpretation. The overall concept of the dissertation is demonstrated also in the staging of the six concerts. Vanya Moneva states a coherent and consistent presentation in the emerging two areas in the research field:

- a) a broad view from the general to the private and going into the depth of the problem and
- b) deriving generalizations in support of the author's thesis.

From the very beginning the author traces the origins of the folk choral art in detail with many facts, showing the evolutionary construction and development of the genre "*song for folk choir*" in Bulgaria. The whole process of assembling the choir, through its vocal and choral training, approach to the choral score in relation with the expressive means of the composer, the interpretation of its essential elements, stage transformation and behavior.

An essential part of the exposition is the analysis of the specifics of the folk choirs and the systematization of the main staging vocal and conducting problems. The whole process of vocal training from singing (as a basic methodological unit for vocal education) to achieving perfection in choral sound is presented. The role of the conductor, his methodological knowledge and practical skills for vocal education of the singers, expressed in all elements of the choral-singing sonority and technique, are very clearly presented here. The candidate's arguments are contributive because they are the result of many years of experience as a choir conductor. She makes generalized conclusions, which prove that along with the vocal training within the choir, the repertoire and the improving vocal

technique and sound culture of the singers, attract the audience in this genre. This provokes numerous composers, who in turn enriched the texture of the songs for folk choir with new compositional means of expression. The discussed individual composers as "*brightly regional*" or "*above regional*" show their repertoire orientation and creative initiative in the approach to the prototype. Thus, the doctoral candidate analyzes the relationship and interdependence between song - composer - performer - vocal skills - conductor and interpretation. To support of her arguments, the author examines the work of a number of prominent conductors, founders of the genre, their compositional style and requirements for the performance technique of the folk singers. She very accurately presents the conducting and interpretation style of leading composers and conductors in the research field. The candidate proves that "*the composers change the sounds way the Bulgarian folk song, set a new stage in its development to the level of authorial, with modern harmonious language, complex polyphonic texture and extended range*". (p. 33) I consider the information in this part of the thesis very valuable, thus collected and systematized, it could be have practical applicability, which is the merit of the work.

In the course of the dissertation, the doctoral candidate convincingly presents an in-depth, thorough study of the stages in the development of the genre "*adaptation for folk choir*". Her many years of conducting experience help her to present the compositional approach to the folk melody of different generations of composers, the use of specific compositional techniques from tradition to modern times and vice versa. A significant contribution of the author is her study of the evolutionary development of the music-making for folk choir, on the one hand as sophistication of the compositional language, and on the other – the work of the conductor and the performers to achieve a true interpretation. Here the candidate emphasizes the compositional approach to the main melody and the gradual complication of the texture by combining harmonic with polyphonic means of expression, the use of aleatory and sonorous techniques, expanding the form and vocal range. Equally valuable are the author's thoughts on the importance of the conductor and his role in educating the members of the choir on the elements of the choral sonority, to achieve a meaningful interpretation expressing the aesthetics of the composer. Based on her conducting experience, Vanya Moneva defines "*two approaches to the realization of sound: from the authentic original of the folk song to the contemporary*" and "*from the contemporary to the folklore original*" (p. 44). All this leads to an analytical approach to the score, to complication of the artistic requirements in the interpretation, which are related to the vocal training of the choristers and the sound quality. The contemporary approach to the traditional original, the instrumental treatment of the folk voice and the need for a culture of sound, put to the test the performing abilities of the singers. Another integral part of the specific requirements for the professional folk choirs in modern times are the recording activities in all its forms. The practical-applied and contributive conclusions of the author find expression in the programs of her six concerts. The main feature connecting the concerts is the evolutionary development of the genre, through stage presentation and interpretation of the doctoral student. The

presented programs reflect the personal responsibility and concern of the doctoral student for the genre and interpretation, as a conductor and choirmaster.

Contributions to the dissertation

I fully accept the presented contributions of the dissertation, which are analytically presented and reliably highlighted, and I will emphasize a few:

- This is the first clear, logical and thorough study of the problem of the difficult path of the conductor in achieving artistic interpretation with a folk choir *acapella*.

- It presents a significant theoretical study of the problem of working with a folk choir, supported by artistic realization of concert performances.

- It outlines practical and applied principles for working with folk choir.

- It explains the main guidelines for the interpretation of folk choir songs and their stage performance.

The conclusion of the dissertation presents in a generalized form its contributions, which are important for the enrichment of folklore science and practice. All arguments and conclusions are derived from the long-term conducting practice of the doctoral candidate and her depth in the field, which is very valuable. The research successfully achieves its goals not only in the theoretical part, but also to achieve applied results, demonstrated through the repertoire included in the concert programs of the doctoral program.

Vanya Moneva has two publications during her studies as a doctoral student. As a choice of topic, they are related to the dissertation and fully meet the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". The abstract meets the standards and correctly conveys the essence and the indicated contributions of the dissertation.

In conclusion

The reviewed theoretical work and six concerts in doctoral thesis of the candidate Vanya Moneva have a serious scientific-practical and applied value. They meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations for its implementation. Based on all of the above, I strongly support the author and the presented text and concerts. I express my positive assessment of the work and the concert repertoire, based on the above contributions.

I strongly recommend to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Vanya Simeonova Moneva with the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor" in Professional Field (8.3): Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty: Musicology and Music Art, for the needs of the Department of Music Folklore. I also congratulate her academic supervisor Prof Kostadin Buradzhiev.

Plovdiv

Prof Svetla Kaludova-Stanilova

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