

R E V I E W

by prof. ANGELINA PETROVA PETROVA, PhD

PROF. PANCHO VLADIGEROV NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Institute of Art Studies - BAS

on the application of

Assoc. Prof. Milena Bogdanova, PhD

Prof. Assen Diamandiev

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts - Plovdiv

for the academic position

PROFESSOR OF SOLFEGGIO AND THEORY OF MUSICAL ELEMENTS

field of higher education: 8. Arts;

professional field: 8.3. Musical and Dance Art

in a competition announced by

PROF. ASEN DIAMANDIEV

ACADEMY OF MUSIC, DANCE AND FINE ARTS - - PLOVDIV,

Faculty of Musical Pedagogy

Department of Musical Pedagogy and Conducting

When one reads the creative biography of Assoc. Prof. Milena Bogdanova, one is impressed by her remarkable creative, scientific and pedagogical contribution over the years. She is a researcher, pedagogue, creative artist in the field of music and hearing education, not only in Bulgaria, but also in European countries. So far she has produced two monographs in the field of solfeggio:

1. *'Musical, pedagogical and theoretical views of prof. Zdravko Manolov in the field of musical and hearing education'*, Plovdiv, 2018. (ISBN: 978-954- 2963-35-6) and
2. *'Solfeggiaring (sol-fa) with Piano Accompaniment - psychotechnique for the development of ear for music'*, Plovdiv, 2021 (ISBN: 978-954-2963-89-9).

Her scientific activity and participation in scientific forums and conferences in Bulgaria and abroad are also noteworthy. She has presented 19 papers, including two in Serbia and Montenegro, and the rest in Sofia and Plovdiv. They are listed as follows in her creative biography. As it is evident from the participation in forums mentioned in her abstract, Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova is one of the most active and interesting current researchers in the field of solfeggio, searching for the intersections of Bulgarian and European music and musical ear training. In addition, she has 21

scientific publications in Bulgarian and international journals, with which she has also emerged as a theorist interested in twentieth-century music, in the ideas and history of twentieth-century Bulgarian music, where her contribution is also remarkable.

Her contributions to pedagogical activity should also be highlighted: her students have won prestigious prizes at the competitions in 'Theory of Musical Elements', Music and Knowledge at NBU-Sofia. Last but not least, it should be pointed out that she is also a performing pianist, having also a long and representative activity in the concert life in our country. For all her varied and rich performing activity, she is also the secretary-coordinator of the Young Scholar Club at AMDFA, where she conducts a series of engaging public lectures and celebrations of prominent Bulgarian and foreign composers and musicians. Through these activities she convincingly demonstrates that teaching solfeggio is a complex activity and, like her subject matter, Professor Asen Diamandiev, from the monograph *'Musical, Pedagogical and Theoretical Views of Prof. Asen Diamandiev in the Field of Music and Hearing Education'*, she is a multifaceted, successful, and engaging musician and scholar with enduring interests and contributions to our contemporary musical culture and to musical-hearing teaching.

The habilitation thesis of Assoc. Prof. Milena Bogdanova, PhD is entitled: 'Musical, Pedagogical and Theoretical Views of Prof. Asen Diamandiev in the Field of Music and Hearing Education'. It lays the foundation for a theoretical and historical analysis of one of the founders of music-hearing education in our country: Prof. Asen Diamandiev, one of the most original theoreticians, pedagogues, who has created and developed the whole spectrum of teaching aids for the discipline 'solfeggio' starting from the primary education, going through the field of folklore and all kinds of musical-hearing activities. We know that prof. Asen Diamandiev is also the first pedagogue and theoretician of musical hearing education in our country who created a special work on the problems of education in the field of music of the twentieth century. In this sense, as the author herself says in her introduction, her monograph is dedicated to the history of the Bulgarian solfeggio school, *'the theory and theoretical formulations that its representatives created and perfected in their scientific writings'* and to *'the practice and activities in the process of working on the education of musical hearing'*. So Milena Bogdanova's work is in fact fundamental and comprehensive, the first of its kind in its dense study of all aspects of the contribution and our solfeggio school, represented by Prof. Asen Diamandiev.

Milena Bogdanova's monographic work is structured in two parts. The first part of the book is devoted to the main and fundamental role of Asen Diamandiev as a pioneer in music and ear training in our country. It begins with the background of the forerunners of music education such as Krastyo Pishurka and Dobri Hristov and then manages to 'unravel' and interpret the history of the discipline and Asen Diamandiev's relationship with Trichkov as a foundation, then with his joint projects with Trendafil Milanov, Ivan Peev, Zdravko Manolov and others. In this way, she is able to examine the main steps in the construction of professional solfeggio training in the second half of the twentieth century in our country, and to organize the information on the basis of which she will highlight the figure of prof. Asen Diamandiev. At the end of this review, she concludes that: *'The history of the Bulgarian professional school of music and ear training continues its development to this day. The enrichment of the pedagogical experience and its linking with the scientific research issues of good practices and innovations in solfeggio education worthily continues the path whose foundations were laid by the artists - pedagogues and founders of the Bulgarian solfeggio school'* (p. 20). In this chapter Milena Bogdanova analyses practical and theoretical works on solfeggio created in Bulgaria. The end of the first part also contains a documentary part: 'Memories of my solfeggio teacher', which complements the ideas and perceptions of prof. Diamandiev.

The second part is titled: *'Musical, Pedagogical and Theoretical Views of Prof. Asen Diamandiev in the field of music and hearing education'*. It is a theoretical elaboration of the issues that Asen Diamandiev introduced into music and hearing education. It is contributory and at the same time summarizes concisely, but in the most essential concepts, the ideas of Asen Diamandiev. In the first part, devoted to the sense of melody, Milena Bogdanova analyses the fundamental system of solfeggio training, in which Asen Diamandiev participated as the main author: 'Initial solfeggios', noting that: *'They (melodic representations) play a key role in the initial accumulation of the musical hearing representations so necessary for the development of musical hearing'* (p.35). Milena Bogdanova's analysis of Elementary Solfeggio is thorough and profound. She reveals the versatility and importance of these tools at the elementary and high school levels. Indeed, a remarkable detail is presented in a way that makes 'Elementary solfeggio' unique not only in Bulgarian, but also in European solfeggio practices. Especially the beginner's dictations are analyzed, which so wonderfully prepare the future young musicians for their

professional practice as future performers and theorists. The analysis of M. Bogdanova on the intonation etudes of Asen Diamandiev presented in Part Seven - truly unique as a contribution to mastering the difficulties of musical-hearing education is very impressive.

A separate section is devoted to the analysis of the cycle of manuals that Asen Diamandiev created on French educational literature. By making a detailed analysis of the theoretical and practical ideas, the ways of contemporary teaching and understanding this cycle created by A. Diamandiev, she concludes that: *'In a summary of the detailed examination compiled by prof. Diamandiev's two-part collection 'Intonation Etudes, Dictations and Solfeggio from French Educational Literature', it can be confidently said that this manual represents a methodically sound systematic course in musical-hearing education built on the grammar of the tonal major-minor system. In the polyphonic samples presented, Prof. Diamandiev exposes musical elements in a specific order, allowing the trainees to acquire an orientation for subsequent polyphonic perception - an orientation for the perceived musical elements in terms of their coexistence'* (p. 83).

The section devoted to Asen Diamandiev's work on metrical sense is also remarkable. Here, as in the previous parts, Milena Bogdanova interprets in great detail and accurately everything that is still used and updated in the practices of musical-hearing training. It is the ideas, analyses of practices and current uses of Asen Diamandiev's contributions that are the strength of her work. At the end of the chapter on metrical sense, she states: *'In support of this is the fact that with all the theoretical and practical tools he created, he managed to fully secure the education of musical hearing in terms of metrical regularities in the stylistics of the classical major-minor system, of Bulgarian folklore, and of 20th century music'* (p.107).

The next section of Milena Bogdanova's research is devoted to one of Asen Diamandiev's most important contributions: the relationship of solfeggio and folklore. This is a controversial but necessary topic, in relation to which Asen Diamandiev's contribution is remarkable. And in this chapter Milena Bogdanova makes very clear and profound analyses of the meaning, the theoretical essence, but also of the practical approaches to be used today concerning the enormous work created by Asen Diamandiev in the relationship of solfeggio and folklore. She ends up with the conclusion: *'In all his models written in a folk spirit, Prof. Diamandiev weaves in, besides artistic, a deep educational intention. The published excerpts are successfully*

used in solfeggio practice and are suitable both for the creation of skills of musical-hearing analysis, solfeggio, and for recording the elements of musical expression characteristic of Bulgarian musical folklore' (p.135). Again, she has created a panorama of practical and theoretical ideas about the actual use of folk-based solfeggio, the dictations and examples of Asen Diamandiev - an intriguing and almost unexplored work in the field of solfeggio of the second half of the twentieth century in our country.

The last chapter of Milena Bogdanova's practical-theoretical study is dedicated to Asen Diamandiev's unique attempt to implement and build a system for solfeggio training in the field of twentieth-century phenomena. The 'Technical Exercise for Mastering Intervals' created by Diamandiev is a unique tool, created when the music of the twentieth century was hardly admissible as a subject for teaching at all, it uses the unique systems of L. Edlund, Polish sources, and cites numerous examples from the work of Bulgarian 12-tone music composers such as Konstantin Iliev and Lazar Nikolov, Ivan Spasov, etc. Again, the idea of analysis of practical input from the contemporary practice leads M. Bogdanova when she comes to the conclusion: *'Thematically, the material in this solfeggio can be conditionally divided into two clearly distinguished sub-themes: one, containing technical exercises for mastering intervals, triplets and quavers, with the aim of building a phonic understanding of intervals and chordal combinations, mainly through sequencing exercises and melodic constructions, and another, constructed from examples, from the musical art literature, convincingly demonstrating the specific use of the musical elements proposed for mastery from the compositional techniques of the twentieth century.'* (p.149).

In her conclusion Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova, PhD highlights the dual purpose of her research: practical and theoretical – *'The aim of the present study - through a detailed analysis and by adding methodological notes and suggestions for forms of work to each specimen, to broaden the range of possibilities in musical-hearing training - I consider fulfilled'* (p. 162).

In conclusion, I can highlight the following contributions of Assoc. Prof. Milena Bogdanova:

1. She has created a contributory and vivid analysis of the historical aspects of the emergence and development of the Bulgarian solfeggio school and the place of Asen Diamandiev in it.
2. She has made a detailed and intriguing historical story of Asen Diamandiev, his versatile activities and his contribution as one of the first creators of the professional system of music and ear training in Bulgaria.
3. She has created a contributory analysis of the basic elements of musical-hearing training: the tonality sense, the metrical sense, etc. by analyzing and examining the vast array of Asen Diamandiev's manuals and writings.
4. She analysed his theoretical contribution to musical hearing education in our country, which is fundamental.
5. The practical-theoretical aspect of the research is of great importance: each analyzed work of Asen Diamandiev is interpreted from the point of view of its functioning in the contemporary practice of musical-hearing education.
6. She has specifically explored the emergence of a system of solfeggio in the field of twentieth-century music, in which Asen Diamandiev links traditional music and twentieth-century music. This is also a serious theoretical and practical contribution of the author.

Summarizing the value of the theoretical research of Assoc. Prof. Milena Bogdanova and taking into account her teaching, artistic and scientific achievements, I believe that they give full grounds for confidence in her ability to enrich the activities of *Prof. Asen Diamandiev* AMDFA in the capacity of a habilitated lecturer, holder of the high academic position of 'Professor'. I confidently recommend to the esteemed members of the scientific jury the election of Assoc. Prof. Milena Bogdanova, PhD as **PROFESSOR OF SOLFEGGIO and THEORY OF MUSICAL ELEMENTS**, field of higher education: 8. Arts; professional field: 8.3. Music and Dance Art at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev* AMDFA – Plovdiv.

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