

REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivaylo Mihaylov

AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv

professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

on the dissertation of

Kalina Decheva

titled

LANGUAGE AS A BONDING FACTOR IN MUSICAL-STAGE ARTS

for awarding the educational and scientific degree *Doctor*

in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

Academic supervisor:

Prof. Dr. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Nowak

The dissertation thesis was discussed and forwarded for public defense at a meeting of the Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performing Arts at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, held on 20.09.2024. It contains a total of 225 pages, organized into general characteristics, three chapters, conclusion, scientific contributions, bibliography, appendices and a list of publications by the author connected with the thesis topic. The bibliography includes 131 titles in several languages, subdivided into three groups – Cyrillic script sources, Latin script sources and Internet sources respectively. The basic research part of the thesis together with the analysis of the chamber-vocal works are supported and illustrated by 71 photos, 21 charts and 2 appendices.

Kalina Decheva - Petkova has an impressive resume. She graduated from Veliko Turnovo University “St. st. Cyril and Methodius” in 1995, Major: English Philology. She works as a senior lecturer in English at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv. Applied linguistics is her major scope of research. As an educator Kalina Decheva is interested in a number of domains - the influence of music on optimization of the English language teaching for arts students; the role of language as a bonding factor in musical stage arts; the microlearning in English language training for the students in vocal classes; the culture of English speaking communities. She has taken part in a numerous conferences and seminars for foreign language teaching, translation and interpretation as well as English literature.

1. Educational experience

Kalina Decheva studied at the English Language School in Plovdiv. She took her Master degrees in Bulgarian and English language and literature from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and from Veliko Turnovo University “St. st. Cyril and Methodius” respectively. At Veliko Turnovo University “St. st. Cyril and Methodius” she covered two postgraduate courses in the Theory of translation – technical and science translation.

In 2023 Kalina Decheva enrolled as a doctoral student on a free form of individual programme *Musicology and music arts* at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine arts in Plovdiv, under the academic supervision of Prof. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Nowak.

2. Work experience

Kalina Decheva has worked as a journalist, translator and educator. In her pedagogical practice she focuses on innovative methods of teaching a foreign language, as well as on motivational factors in the implementation of the educational process. In the course of her work she pays particular attention to the interdisciplinary approach in combination with the mental well-being of her students.

3. Artistic experience

- Language consultant for the staging of *Blue Monday* by Gershwin by AOT /Academic Opera Theatre/
- Language consultant for 2 crossover concerts of students from the class of prof. Ludmil Petkov
- Individual articulation work with students from vocal classes

The motifs of choice for the topic of the dissertation paper are clearly stated from its very beginning, “the author was curious to know how the language connects the performer with the verbal text of the musical-stage work and with the ideas that text implies.” (p. 4) and further: “With the expansion of globalization in recent years, the exchange and integration of students of different nationalities and cultures is a fact... Keeping in mind the author’s many years of educational and research experience, it is expected that this work will trace and analyze the aforementioned connections, which is also a reason for choosing the topic.” (p. 4). Continuing the flow of thought, I would like to share my personal impressions of the doctoral student as a dedicated teacher and good friend of the students, who has gone beyond the limits of the dry matter of language learning. The above mentioned approach to her work invariably builds that kind of experience and confidence which resulted in such an extensive work.

Chapter one mainly presents a theoretical analysis of the constructs under discussion, namely the language with its main function to conduct communication, the English phonetics, the musical-stage genres /opera, operetta and musical/, as well as the symbiosis between verbal text and music in a musical-stage work. The derived definition is that "The primary function of language is to conduct communication." (p. 15). Animal communication, the language of gestures and body language are further explored to trace de Saussure's semiotic notion that "Language is a system of signs expressing ideas" (p. 15) and to reach to details such as " the interdental consonants, which are strange to the Bulgarian consonant system" (p. 36). All this material is richly illustrated by tables, charts and musical examples.

Chapter two is devoted to "some language difficulties when staging repertoire, mostly in English and most often in a multinational group made up of performers belonging to different nationalities" (p. 9). An international standard is applied - "a scale when working with student singers, fully complying with the concepts underlying the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (p.77). The research continues with the interviews of three singers "whose level of foreign language proficiency has reached an admirable height" (p.77) in order to define the levels of language competence according to the unified criteria by which they are determined.

Chapter three examines in detail the motivational techniques and strategies for achieving a high quality of language competence and gaining confidence in handling the foreign language on stage. The author elaborates on Carol Dweck's Theory of motivation because "it frames the motivation for progress and success" (p. 12).

I consider that the goals and tasks of the work have been fulfilled!

I accept as credible and practically applicable the contributions of the dissertation thesis presented at the end of that work.

The candidate has published the following articles on the topic of the dissertation thesis:

1. **Strategies to Deal with Pronunciation when Staging Repertoire in English (*Blue Monday* by Gershwin, a performance of the AOT /Academic Opera Theatre/ at AMDFA);** IV International Scientific Conference "Science, Education and Innovations in the Field of Art" AMDFA "Prof. Assen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, Oct. 26-27 2023,

Collection Reports, Volume 1, ISSN 2738-8956, p. 127 -133. – the collection is out of print April 2024.

2. The Importance of the Text for its Audience in a Musical-stage Performance.

The Outcomes of a Questionnaire; National Scientific Conference "Spring Scientific Readings AMDFA" Prof. Assen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, May 2024; under print

3. Some Musicologists' Ideas on the Unity between Text and Music in a Musical-stage Performance; National Scientific Conference "Spring Scientific Readings AMDFA" Prof. Assen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, May 2024; under print

In conclusion, I state my opinion about Kalina Decheva's dissertation thesis "**Language as a bonding factor in musical-stage arts**" - it is a large-scale, detailed and profound work with undeniably scientific and applied value and a treasured contribution to performing and teaching practice in Bulgaria. Based on everything that has been said so far, I strongly suggest to the respected scientific jury to award Kalina Decheva the educational and scientific degree "*Doctor*" in professional field 8.3. – *Music and Dance Art*.