

REVIEW

by **Prof. Dr. Svilen Raychev**

on dissertation thesis for awarding
educational and scientific degree *Doctor*
to Kalina Decheva - Petkova
titled

LANGUAGE AS A BONDING FACTOR IN MUSICAL-STAGE ARTS

academic supervisor: Prof. Dr. Toni Shekerdzhieva – Nowak

Kalina Decheva - Petkova graduated from Veliko Turnovo University “St. st. Cyril and Methodius” in 1995, Major: English Philology. She has taken part in conferences and seminars for foreign language teaching, translation and interpretation as well as English literature.

Kalina Decheva has published numerous articles in specialized and refereed printed issues and has presented reports at prestigious scientific forums. Her main research interests are in the field of applied linguistics and she is an English teacher.

On 22.11.2023 Kalina Decheva enrolled as a doctoral student on a free form of individual programme *Musicology and music arts* at the Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performing Arts at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine arts in Plovdiv, professional field 8.3 *Music and dance arts*.

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 in September, 2024.

The dissertation thesis contains a total of 225 pages, organized into an introduction, three chapters with subchapters, conclusion, bibliography, appendices, scientific contributions and a list of publications by the author connected with the thesis topic. There are 17 charts and figures, 22 photos and 2 musical note examples.

The major goal of the dissertation thesis is to prove the role of language as a bonding factor between the author's idea, the singers and their audience when performing a musical-stage piece.

It has been formulated an easily applicable model for achieving correct articulation and good diction in singing which is based on a theoretical analysis in the field of linguistics and foreign language methodology. The aforementioned model can be used in the process of training future performers in musical-stage activities, regardless of their level of English language acquisition.

The research expands our understanding that the language of the musical-stage work is a bonding factor in the musical-stage arts.

Each part of the dissertation thesis emphasizes and highlights the principles and difficulties in solving specific tasks keeping in mind the symbiosis between verbal text and music in a musical-stage piece.

Chapter one pays special attention to the symbolic nature of language. The real manifestation of human language as a means of communication in oral and written speech is also defined, based on the opinion of some well-known linguists from ancient times to present days.

Citation: *"We assume that the verbal text of the musical work, which consists of words /signs/, is scrutinized and interpreted by the performer, and its decoded meaning is the bridge between the author and the performer from one side, the performer him/herself continues this bridge, extending it to the audience."* p.7 of the dissertation thesis.

It is paid attention to the singer's diction and pronunciation so that the audience can clearly understand what is being sung on stage. The author's idea is also better revealed in the musical-stage work by means of synthesis between text and music.

Chapter two is titled: "Some language difficulties when staging foreign language repertoire, particularly in English." It is taken into consideration that singers can have a different level of language competence and their articulation of certain English sounds can bear some specifics. Special attention is paid to pronunciation and articulation difficulties of the growing number of Chinese students and to some strategies for dealing with the problematic areas. The chapter highlights the positive influence of music on different aspects of foreign language learning.

Chapter three is titled: "Motivational techniques and strategies for achieving a high quality of language competence and gaining confidence from handling the foreign language on stage". It also explores and compares various motivational techniques. This chapter profoundly compares, studies and explores how performers' satisfaction with the results achieved through better performance, and in particular with correct articulation and diction, enhances the quality of their overall performance on stage.

The latest motivational theories are presented and discussed in detail to prove their modernity and appropriateness. The doctoral student argues that the listening audience is multinational and belonging to different cultures somewhat determines the specificity in the perception as well as the difference in the reaction of that very audience.

Citation: *"Not only the knowledge of the cultural characteristics, but also the mastery of the language of a musical piece by the performing artist brings him/her closer to the audience and ensures the emotional effect to be stronger."* p. 39 of the abstract.

According to the author of the dissertation under discussion, there is a great need to combine vocal work on a musical-stage piece with the work on improving the performance of its verbal language. A good mastery of the language will bring the artist-performer even closer not only to the ideas and beliefs of the author, but also to the universal ideas and feelings in general. Then the contact with the audience will be better and the satisfaction it brings will strengthen the motivation to achieve beneficial results.

The dissertation thesis presents evidence for the effectiveness of the model for improving performers' language skills. Naturally, there is also the fear of the audience's negative

assessment of the performance. To a large extent, the negative reaction of the audience is the cause for the stage fright according to the author.

A special part is dedicated to formulating and analyzing the reasons for possible failures and difficulties when working with a verbal text in a foreign language in the process of staging a musical-stage piece.

The conclusion makes an attempt to summarize the main points and highlight the contributing moments of the text, and it could be concluded that, as a result of all the suggested theoretical and empirical facts in the present thesis, language plays the role of a bonding factor in musical-stage arts.

The research focuses on the mechanisms by which the verbal text of the musical-stage work implies its ideas and the performer manages to get as close as possible to the author's beliefs. Language helps the performer to submit the above mentioned beliefs to the audience and to convey what s/he felt and sensed from the music and text of the particular musical-stage piece.

The dissertation is an analytical reflection of the author on the role of language as a bonding factor in musical-stage arts.

Using analysis of specific examples, the dissertation examines how singers adapt their techniques to respond to linguistic peculiarities.

The dissertation thesis under discussion enriches our scientific literature. Its ideas can serve as a basis for new scientific papers and as a valuable guideline for the benefit of both vocal teachers and their student-singers who begin their own artistic journey aspiring to conquer the world stages.

The dissertation is definitely applied in character. Thus, it is a natural link between the past and future development of vocal music. The thesis emphasizes the importance of the language of the libretto for the performer. S/he should have a good command of the language in which the libretto of the musical piece is written, or at least a good command of its phonetic system.

I totally agree with the contributions of the dissertation work claimed by the author.

The doctoral student also has the necessary scientific publications on the subject.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the thesis has the necessary contributive qualities of a dissertation for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "*Doctor*".

I am convinced that the dissertation of Kalina Decheva - Petkova has a contributive nature in both theoretical and applied sense. The overall work and contributions of the candidate meet the requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "*Doctor*" in professional field 8.3. – *Music and Dance Arts* and I appeal to the reputable scientific jury to award this degree to the candidate.

I would also like to extend my special congratulations to the academic supervisor Prof. Dr. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Nowak for the job well done.

Prof. Dr. Svilen Raichev

