

OPINION

by **Prof Todor Aleksandrov Kirov, PhD**

on Dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

in field 8.3. Musicology and Music art,

with author **Paolina Krasenova Vasileva,**

doctoral candidate at the Department of Musical Folklore,

Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography,

at Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof. Asen Diamandiev"- Plovdiv, titled

Folklore instrumental practices in Varna and some settlements in the region

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The study and preservation of traditional Bulgarian folklore is an essential necessity in terms of preserving our national Bulgarian identity. The studies that are being done in order to study and pass it on to future generations are motivated by this. The diversity of the Bulgarian folklore has been subject of many works by Bulgarian and foreign researchers. Based on the conclusions in these studies, we find that there are six folklore regions in Bulgaria – Thracian, Rhodope, Pirin, Shopski, Northern and Dobrudzha. However, we cannot ignore that there are local differences within the mentioned regions, such as Strandzha, Northwestern Bulgaria, Deliorman, Pazardzhik, Sliven, Haskovo ... regions that have their own specifics in terms of folklore.

In this sense, we can talk about the folklore in Varna, moreover, there is no consensus part of which of the two - Dobrudzha or Northern folklore areas belongs to this region. The folklore in Varna region has its own features, it embodies the historical events, the lifestyle and culture of the population that lived and still lives there, reflects the migration processes. The diversity of the ethnic composition of the population has affected the cultural heritage of this region. The musical-dance and ritual manifestations of the separate ethnic groups, bearing the marks of the art of their ancestors, are largely preserved. However, the long coexistence of these groups has given rise to some common, specific features of folk art, which is due to the mutual influence between the different ethnic societies.

The bagpipe, kaval and rebec, instruments that are typical for the whole of Bulgaria, are completely preserved in the Varna region. Today we are witnessing significant changes in the instrumental folk art: folk instruments are being improved, classical instruments are being used, music of various genres is being interpreted, harmonious orchestral music is being developed ... Of course, these changes do not pass the Varna region, but we can say for sure that the bagpipe, the kaval and the rebec have retained their popularity, traditional look and way of playing.

The topic of the instrumental folklore practices in the Varna region has so far remained out of the attention of the researchers, as the existing publications mainly deal with the art of singing and dancing. Paolina Vasileva, a doctoral student at the Department of Musical Folklore at the AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", took up this topic.

Paolina was born in Varna and there she received her passion and development in the field of folklore. She started gadulka (rebec) lessons when she was 7 years old with the teachers Gencho Stoyanov, Zhechko Tenev, Simeon Simeonov and later at the Music Academy in Plovdiv with Prof Todor Kirov. In her artistic career she has received many individual awards as a rebec-player, which is also her Bachelor's degree from the Academy. She also has a Master's degree in Pedagogy of Music Education at the same school. Since 2018 she is a doctoral student at the Department of Musical Folklore. She is currently a music teacher in a kindergarten.

Paolina Vasileva presents as dissertation thesis the theoretical work "Folklore instrumental practices in Varna and some villages in the region. It is noteworthy that the author has reviewed a significant amount of literature and has done useful field work – she has conducted many interviews and presents very detailed information. There is no information about other studies focused on the instrumental performance in the Varna region. Her experience as an instrumentalist, as well as her devotion to her homeland, gave her courage for this theoretical research.

The paper is structured in three chapters: it presents historical and ethno-demographic information about Varna region, analyzes the regional peculiarities of the musical folklore, the musical and in particular the instrumental folklore practices, and makes a review of previous theoretical research related to the topic. The focus of the research is on the instrumental folk music in Varna and the region, as in the exhibition differentiates amateur, nonprofessional, professional and educational practices. A special place is given to the two ethnic groups Vayats and Gagauz, including historical

data, form of communication with other ethnic groups, location, customs, clothing, livelihood, speech, musical events, etc.

Recommendations:

The first chapter focuses on the ethno-demographic characteristics of Varna and the region. However, in this chapter are included points 1.2 "Instrumental practices of the population in Varna" and 1.3.3 "Musical practices in the studied settlements", which in their content can be referred to Chapter Two, which deals with these practices of amateur art in the studied settlements.

Chapter Two is devoted to "amateur music making" and "organized amateur movement". The text we read in point 2.2 (p. 57-90) clarifies how the interviews were conducted and retells the information provided by the multitude of informants, which gives a journalistic style to the reading and overwhelms the reader with details. I would recommend, as would be appropriate for a scientific study, the text to include thoughts by the author, with summaries and conclusions about the instruments, melodies, customs and performers in villages and regions, and the details to be presented as footnotes. In fact, there is an attempt for such a generalization (p. 90), but it is short, superficial and insufficient.

On page 60 there is a text: "At the Bucharestliev fair it makes an impression that melodies with "kirma" are no longer performed ...". The author is obviously discussing a bagpipe, but for the average reader (unfamiliar with the structure of the folk instruments) it is unclear what this expression means, and especially the term "kirma". It would be good to provide an explanation, a footnote (like the explanation of how to hang the rebec on page 70). The following sentence sounds similar: "From the performance of the kaval players standing out with the mastery of all the registers of the kaval..." – i.e., some explanation is needed of what these registers represent. Where the candidate cites individual musicians she mentions the structure of the kaval and bagpipes (p. 73, 75, 79, 81, 83) and the number of strings and the way of tuning the rebec (p. 70, 72, 80), but does not give an explanation of what they are or an example with other similar instruments, as well as with popular and already established in the practice.

Point 2.3 of the Second Chapter, entitled "Organized Amateur Movement after the 1950s" (p. 91-103), provides useful information from authors of publications on the topic, but the summaries are insufficient.

The third chapter is dedicated to professional performance and training. There are three main points in it: professional ensemble art, wedding genre and folk instrumental training. Particularly valuable here are the reflections of the individual teachers regarding the ways of implementing folk-instrumental performing arts among adolescents, the difficulties they experience, as well as the description of the main teaching methods they use in today's conditions.

The "recommendations" section will also include the following:

= p.56 - "The appearance of the festivals in Gramatikovo, Koprivshitsa, Rozhen and other **regional** festivals ..." – the festivals are not regional, but national.

= p.68 - In the sentence "Because he **does not know the notes**, he learns by auditory imitation, as he **does not know the notes**." there is repetition of the same text.

This research comes at the right time and fills a certain gap - it provides useful information, defines the profile of the Varna region and specifically the folklore instrumental practices in it. The candidate did very well, drawing information from all possible theoretical sources, but mostly from field informants, which is a complex and time-consuming task. The work is valuable and contributes to the field of art and science in general.

Regardless of my recommendations, my assessment is positive. I am convinced that Paolina Krasenova Vasileva is worthy of being awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Въпреки направените препоръки, оценката ми е положителна. Убедено считам, че Паолина Красенова Василева е достойна за присъждане на ОНС „Доктор”.