

REVIEW

by Prof Galya Georgieva Petrova-Kirkova, PhD

AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv

of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "**doctor**"

field of higher education: *Arts*, scientific specialty: *Choreography*

doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

professional field: 8.3 *Music and Dance Art*

with author: Rumyana Vangelova Filkova, doctoral student at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, Faculty of Music Folklore and Choreography, Department of Choreography

Title: *Specificity in the performance of the maiden ritual songs and dance practices in some settlements of Southwestern Bulgaria*

Academic supervisor: Prof Daniela Dzheneva, PhD

1. General presentation of the procedure and the materials presented for review

By Order No RD - 27-059 dated 15.04.2024 of the Rector of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of a dissertation work on the topic *Specificity in the performance of the maiden ritual songs and dance practices in some settlements of Southwestern Bulgaria* by Rumyana Vangelova Filkova - full-time doctoral student with supervisor Prof Daniela Dzheneva, at the doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art, Department of Choreography at the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv. The following documents are submitted: the candidate's curriculum vitae, dissertation, abstract, Order No RD-27-046 of 30.06.2017 for enrolment and Order No RD-27-030 of 15.06.2020 for discharge, reference for contributions, publications and reports on the research topic.

2. Brief biographical data

Rumyana Filkova is a prominent performer, a bright representative of the folk-song tradition from the Pirin area, with numerous and rich concert and artistic-creative activities, which she realizes in the country and abroad: USA, Great Britain, Canada, Spain, Belgium, Serbia, Italy, etc. We have played music together in vocal quartet Plovdiv, folklore ensemble Trakia, and I have direct personal impressions of her high professionalism, bright singing talent and performance skills. She has made recordings for the Bulgarian National Radio and radio-television center - Blagoevgrad, participant in a number of television shows, solo concert performances with various orchestras, prizes and participation in assemblies-contests, competitions and festivals.

In addition to performing, her work also includes teaching as a vocal pedagogue in folk singing. She was born in Blagoevgrad and graduated from the secondary music school in the village of Shiroka Laka (1999). She studied and successfully graduated AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" with

Bachelor degree (2003) in Instrumental Art - Folk Singing, Master's degree in Performing Art - Folk Singing (2007), postgraduate qualification in Pedagogy of Music Education and Bulgarian Folk Choreography (2004).

Since 2000 she has been working as a folk singer in folklore ensemble Trakia.

3. The relevance of the topic is determined by the lack of in-depth study to present the regional singing art of the Pirin region. "*There is not complete local study and a complex study of the customary-ritual song-dance tradition, the connection with the dramaturgy in the custom and the stylistic specifics in the singing performance art.*" (p.4) The doctoral student is highly motivated to continue her research in this direction, as leading are her personal emotional connection with this region, the experience as a performer and the study of specific features in the manner of performance examined through the prism of song-dance folklore.

4. Expediency of the research methods used to achieve the set goals

The use of the presented methods: **empirical, descriptive, analytical, comparative-analytical** contribute to the in-depth study of the specific features in the performance of the characteristic maiden ritual songs and dance practices. Extremely valuable is the field work, which reveals important, specific features of the song dialect, studied in the first person, of an extremely contributory nature. This method makes it possible to conduct interviews with respondents, filling out surveys, free conversation, where information is presented extremely casually and reliably, in some cases based on personal memories, recreating emotional experiences. The stories of the ancestors are authentic and most often reveal in depth and detailed knowledge of the musical-folklore practices. An important point for achieving the set goals is the study of the history and archival materials that have been preserved in the respective settlements as evidence of the traditional song-dance practices in a period of layering of separate cultural layers. The dissertation is also based on theoretical studies in the Bulgarian folklore, ethnomusicology and ethno-choreology.

5. Evaluation of the dissertation work:

The dissertation work (175 pages) contains: introduction, three chapters conclusion, contributions, named list of informants, list of publications and reports, bibliography (126 titles). The work is distinguished by logical consistency and completeness. The indicated bibliography shows thoroughness and good knowledge of the researched issues. The main parameters and methodology of the study are presented in the **introduction**. The object, subject, goal and tasks are specified, the main motives are indicated, the content is clearly formed not only in a theoretical aspect, including "*song examples accompanied by sheet music, dance examples, quotes from informants and scientific quotes from previous publications on the subject.*" (p.6), but also with a clearly expressed practical-applied nature. "*The systematization of the material in the work also has a practical task - to be used as a source of information with scientific-theoretical significance and with applied artistic value in the modern music and dance art.*" (p. 6)

The author categorically states her conviction regarding the importance and significance of the

song-dance folklore tradition in this region, the responsibility for its preservation and adaptation to the modern conditions as an important factor for the education of the young generation in knowledge of the Bulgarian cultural values.

Chapter 1 contains an overview of the main studies on the subject in historical terms. The theoretical works of prominent folklorists, ethnographers, ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists related to the traditional rituality, directly corresponding to the main goal of the dissertation work, have been examined. They serve as a foundation of the present study and a starting point for the findings and conclusions regarding the ritual practices in the specific customs Voditsi, Lazaruvane and Easter, as well as the characteristic elements and specific features of the song-dance performance style. The author shares that *"The review of the scientific samples bequeathed by them further points out the need for a more detailed and specific study related to the specificity of the song-dance performance style of the maiden customs in the dissertation."* (p. 7)

Chapter 2 examines the characteristic features of the music and dance folklore in Southwestern Bulgaria. **Paragraph 2.1** presents the historical-geographical and ethnological characteristics of the region, highlighting the factors that have an impact on its specificity - historical, geographical, socio-economic, cultural, ethnographic, etc. The author points out the fact that historically, territorial changes as a result of wars lead to migration processes, which in turn affect the traditional folk culture and lead to the mixing of regional and local specificities. In **paragraph 2.2**, Vangelova makes a comparative analysis of the song tradition that exists and is distinguished by richness and diversity in terms of repertoire in the different regions - Blagoevgrad, Razlog, Gotsedelchevski, Sandansko-Petrichki and their sub-regions. She notes the preservation of ancient song samples in some of the settlements, and in others the predominant overflow of the features of the traditional culture of the local and the migrated population. The specific features of the Pirin double voice and the manner of performance in relation to the regional determination are examined in detail. The unique singing "on high" in the villages of Dolen and Satovcha and the two-voice songs *"with hiccups"* characteristic only of Bansko are reflected. **Paragraph 2.3** contains a general description of the traditional dance folklore. Similar to the song tradition, the author examines in detail the marks of the dance folklore for the region, and the specific characteristics of the different areas. She says that *"In the Pirin folklore region, it is a common practice for dances to be performed to a song. The main bearers of the song and the two-voice performance style are the women."* (p.23) *"Men's dances are performed to the accompaniment of a whistle, tambourine, bagpipe, zurni, drums and very rarely a song."* (p.24) The summary confirms the richness and the diversity of the singing and dancing folklore of the Pirin region. *"The abundance of folklore values and their preservation to this day has transformed this region into a kind of "reserve" of the Bulgarian artistic culture."* (p. 27)

Chapter 3 is an important part of the study and emphasizes its contribution nature. With the help of an applied methodology, it examines the **specifics of the musical performance style and dance practices of the maiden customs** - Voditsi, Lazaruvane and Easter in four settlements - the

villages of Dobarsko, Igralishte, Nikudin and Pirin. The customs presented, the summaries and conclusions drawn are based on conducted field research, and the names of the respondents from whom the specific information was obtained are correctly indicated.

Paragraph 3.1 presents the Voditsi (St Jordan's day) custom in the village of Dobarsko. The preparation and the whole process of the custom, the clothing of the maidens, the performed ritual songs and the accompanying characteristic dance movements are described in detail. The typical structural features of the ritual songs are analyzed and summarized - form, melodic and modal structure, metrorhythm, ornamentation, verse structure. The singing is examined in relation to the various elements of the vocal technique - mechanism of sound formation, singing breathing, vocal formation, articulation and diction, ornamentation, strokes, phonetic features of the dialect, specific singing techniques. Lyrics and sheet music examples of the songs are included. The ritual ring-dances are analyzed according to relevant criteria: "*performance method, form, direction of movement, grips*". (p.53) **Paragraph 3.2** examines the custom Lazaruvane in the village of Igralishte. Like paragraph 3.1, all the specifics of the musical-performance style and dancing practices in the discussed custom, which are based on field research, are presented. Emphasis is placed on the elements of the custom specific only to this region and the "special" songs performed to them. The author has established that the usual practice is no longer followed nowadays, but shares that "*Thanks to the groups for authentic folklore at the community centers in the villages, the national folklore assemblies and festivals, the unique examples of our folklore heritage are preserved, maintained and kept.*" (p. 68) **Paragraph 3.3** describes the celebration of Easter in the villages of Nikudin and Igralishte by drawing a parallel, analyzing similarities and differences in the song and dance repertoire in the two villages, offering valuable generalizations and conclusions regarding the specified song and dance examples. The custom of Lazaruvane from the village of Pirin is presented in detail in **paragraph 3.4**, which is another proof of the existence of a rich and specific singing and dancing culture.

The **conclusion** summarizes the in-depth study regarding the specifics in the performance of the maiden ritual songs and dancing practices in the examined settlements of Southwestern Bulgaria. The main highlights of the overall work are outlined, the achieved results are indicated, the conclusions drawn are reflected. In connection with the achievement of the set goal, the author says: "*Based on the set goal, I was able to comprehensively and thoroughly analyze the characteristic features of the song and dance examples, as well as to describe and systematize in detail the specific stylistic features in the singing manner of performance.*" (p. 155)

6. Contributions and significance of the thesis

The contributions are listed in a separate section, in 5 points, which I accept and admire. The detailed study and analysis of the local singing style and the specific features in the manner of performance, the dance culture - the ritual dances stand out. The researched field material is extremely valuable as a basis for creating new music and dance works.

The author presents 4 **publications and reports**, which reflect the main research emphasis of

the dissertation, as well as the rich practical and research experience of the candidate.

7. The Abstract (50 pages) is prepared according to the requirements, accurately reflects the structure and synthesized content of the dissertation work, object, subject, goal and tasks, reference to the scientific contributions, bibliography, publications and reports on the subject.

8. Conclusion: The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which are an original contribution to science and meet the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and the Regulations for its implementation. I congratulate the candidate and her supervisor Prof Daniela Dzheneva for the achieved results. I confidently give my positive assessment of the research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award Rumiana Vangelova Filkova the educational and scientific degree "**doctor**" in the field of higher education: Arts, professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

25. 05. 2024

Reviewer:

Prof Galya Petrova-Kirkova, PhD