

REVIEW

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professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art
for acquiring educational and scientific degree “Doctor”
in professional field 8.3. Music and dance art
with candidate Vanya Simeonova Moneva

The dissertation of Vanya Simeonova Moneva titled *Contemporary interpretations of songs for female folk choir* is a serious work of 107 pages. And by serious I mean not only the amount of the text, which in font *Times New Roman*, 12 points and according the standard of 1800 characters per page, makes up 125 pages of text, but also the logic of its overall construction, as well as the volume and content of the meanings embedded in the overall study of the problem.

The dissertation contains an **Introduction**, three chapters, entitled respectively **Chapter One** *The Folk Choir – Specifics and Problems*, **Chapter Two** *Interpretation in Choral Folk Art*, **Chapter Three** *Contemporary Concert Interpretations of Songs for Female Folk Choir*, **Conclusion**, **Contributions of the dissertation**, **Bibliography of used literature**, **Appendix - Alphabetical list of the used citations**.

I should start with evaluation of the significance of the researched problem in scientific and scientific-applied terms. And here - I can safely say that we have before us an extremely valuable, significant and fundamental study of problems of the interpretation. A study based on the personal empirical experience of such an exceptional musician as Vanya Moneva, her ideas and philosophical views on the nature of music, her very accurate analytical view, which strikes from the very first lines of the text with its textbook formulations. And these are the definitions, from the first pages of the introduction, of the types of interpretation, of the work with the material environment of sound – physical objects and the musical meanings embodied in it – for the search for the performer of “*real, reliable reading of the score*”, of the ways to build the musical work, of the co-creation of the performer and the presentation of an individual strategy based on a number of complex factors such as “*consolidated reflection on certain stylistic trends, empirical overlays, personal taste and many other subjective factors.*”

The object of the research is “*the adopted folk song in its choral version for a folklore choir*”, an extremely valuable phenomenon in our national school of composition. The subject of the research is defined precisely and clearly from the very title and it is “the conductor's interpretation of the songs for folk choir”. The goals and tasks are also formulated very precisely and clearly and they are related to “*proving the extremely important role of interpretation in the concert presentation of works for folk*

choir". To achieve these goals the candidate uses, as main tools of the study, the discussion and explanation of the understanding of the whole process of realization of the musical score and the work on different specifics in the interpretation of folk choir songs, the discussion of all these problems depending on different acoustic environments and spaces (and here, the commented work with the material reality of sound turns out to be so important), as well as the practical, concert realization of the works commented in the dissertation. The wide range of research methods chosen by the author is remarkable. These include the analytical method, the synthesis, the artistic experiment, the comparison and finally the verification in the concert and recording practice. As I have already said, Vanya Moneva is a performer with incredible experience and practice, and here we must realize that the theoretical statements presented in the dissertation have both rich theoretical and practical basis and in the whole text it is clear that the dissertation has a clearly developed and constructed theoretical model of research. It can be seen both in the clearly defined object, subject, goals and tasks of the research set by Vanya Moneva, and in the overall logic of building this so valuable dissertation.

The logic of the research is based on an initial phase of clarifying the basis of the problem of the specifics of the folk choir as a musical ensemble, as a structure and composition. The author studies in depth the history and the context of the origin of choral folklore art, as well as the most prominent masters of interpretation among the conductors of folklore ensembles. The next chapter, chapter two, presents the different periods in the development of the genre of arrangement from its inception to the present day, and the main specifics of the activity in the work of the conductor of a folk choir. And the information and facts presented here are undoubtedly extremely valuable, especially in terms of the various factors that pose challenges, stimulate, and organize the daily activities of the conductor of a folk choir. This second chapter also examines many specific requirements regarding the work with professional folk choirs and various interpretative issues placed in a contemporary context. The third chapter presents the creative strategies of the dissertation in the selection and implementation of six concerts of contemporary musical works written for folk choir – some of them performed for the first time. The concerts include different programs, combining the folk choir with different instrumental ensembles: orchestra, string quartet, classical musical instruments or combination of different genre performers, personal interpretation of songs from the "classics" of the Bulgarian folklore. Such a well-ordered logic of research and text structuring shows extremely high compliance of the chosen by the author methodology and research methods, both with the object of research and with the goal and objectives of the dissertation.

The contributions of the text are many and far more than those presented by the author. They should be related to the already discussed problem with the so important material reality of sound – a problem comparable to that of commenting on the materiality of light and the incredible importance of these two material environments in the arts. Hence, the contribution presented by Vanya Moneva, related to the meaning and influence of the different acoustic environments on the interpretations of the same musical work. An extremely important theoretical formulation, derived quite naturally from

the rich experience of the doctoral candidate, is related to the work with modern recording technologies and especially to the different types of recording - concert and studio. On such a solid practical and theoretical basis, the author systematizes in the most brilliant way the practically applied aspects in the performance of the folk choirs and the most typical features of modern stylistic approaches. The candidate considers and clarifies various specifics and interpretation problems in the work with a folk choir, and offers extremely valuable solutions tested in practice. Moreover, Vanya Moneva focuses her attention on the contact with the audience and brings out the ideas of her conducting readings and solutions of various works based on the ideas of transformative communication. Something on which Moneva's impeccable, practice-proven strategy regarding the choice of repertoire is based.

The text of Vanya Simeonova Moneva's dissertation is based on citations and references of a representative number of authors, as the **Bibliography** indicates a total of 150 titles in Cyrillic, which include fundamental publications on the topic. Extremely valuable in this case is also the huge time range of the considered publications which covers a period of over a century, starting with publications of Georgi Baidanov from 1910 related to the importance of choral singing and its pedagogical and educational significance and reaching to the present day. All these publications are cited very correctly and precisely in the body of the text. Moreover, an appendix entitled *Alphabetical list of used citation* is added to the text. The selected literature and the choice of the publications cited in the dissertation is a clear and reliable proof of the great erudition of the candidate, as well as her extremely high level of knowledge of the problem and the context of development of our contemporary music theory literature.

The text is accompanied by two publications in compliance with Criteria 9 – Articles and reports published in specialized editions in the field of arts in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations for the application of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in Field 8. Arts:

1. Moneva, Vanya. (2021). *Principles in the repertoire strategy in developing a concert program for female folk choir*. In: JOURNAL VFU. - Varna: Varna Free University. "Chernorizets Hrabar", Issue 14, 2021, ISSN 1313-7514 (online).

2. Moneva, Vanya. (2020). *The conductor's reading of the score - the main engine of the interpretive concept*. In: JOURNAL VFU. - Varna: Varna Free University. "Chernorizets Hrabar", Issue 13, 2020, ISSN 1313-7514 (online).

Again, in accordance with these regulations, six large and leading concert performances of Vanya Moneva were presented, which in turn meet the requirements of Criteria 13. Leading (or independent) artistic performance in the field of arts, which is not the main habilitation work.

I am fully and basically acquainted with the abstract presented to me by the candidate, which contains 51 pages and accurately and clearly presents the main points of the dissertation work.

I know the doctoral candidate personally and I have attended many of her concerts. I believe that Vanya Moneva is an outstanding Bulgarian musician with a huge and irreplaceable contribution to

the development of both the national music culture and the national school of composers. I accept the contributions listed by Vanya Moneva and in view of the above, I will allow myself to give an extremely high assessment, based on merits, of both the overall practical and research work of the candidate, and his entire work in writing the dissertation. I hereby would like to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Vanya Simeonova Moneva the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in specialty 8.3. "Music and dance art".

Sofia 26.05.2022

Prof Georgi Asenov Arnaudov, PhD