

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof Rada Borislavova Slavinska, PhD
Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts
“Prof Asen Diamandiev”

Regarding dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in Higher education field 8. *Arts*, Professional field 8.3. *Music and Dance Art*, doctoral program Musicology and Music Art.

Author: Vanya Simeonova Moneva

Topic: Contemporary interpretations of songs for female folk choir

Academic supervisor: Prof Kostadin Buradzhiev

General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral candidate

By order № RD27 - 024 of 22.03.2022 of the Rector of AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev” and pursuant to Art. 3 of the regulations for the implementation of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and Resolution of the Faculty Council at the Faculty of Fine Arts (Minutes № 18/15.03.2022), I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury to supervise a procedure for the defense of a dissertation work titled *Contemporary interpretations of songs for female folk choir*” authored by Vanya Simeonova Moneva, for obtaining educational and scientific degree “doctor” in Higher education field Arts, Professional field 8.3 Music and dance art. The author of the dissertation is Vanya Moneva – part-time doctoral student at the Department of Music Folklore, AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev”. She has presented a set of documents (on paper and on magnetic media) related to the procedure for the defense of the dissertation, as well as 2 publications related to the topic of the dissertation. I have no remarks on the submitted documents and materials.

Vanya Moneva is one of the most prominent conductors of folk choirs in Bulgaria. Her impressive biography, the thousands of concerts in the country and abroad, the deep knowledge of the Bulgarian folklore and its choral interpretation, the statement of her convincing inventions for decades - all this is a huge and versatile empirical basis on which she builds both her artistic and creative concept in the development of the dissertation. The overall music and life concept of Vanya Moneva and the hundreds of adopted works, many of which for the first time, prove long-term interest in the interpretation of folklore choirs, the latest compositional innovations, unexplored territories.

Relevance of the topic

In the introduction the author states that in addition to the known and generally applicable methods of work she will use the method of verification, as "*most of the theoretical statements are based on*

empirical superimpositions, combined with a solid theoretical basis. The entire artistic and creative research is the result of many years of conducting female folk choir” [p. 6]. This largely determines the relevance of this work. Until now, the topic of interpretation in folklore choral performance is almost unexplored in Bulgarian musicology, and contemporary interpretations in the genre - an absolutely relevant and necessary study. Moreover – as an active and experimental performer, presenting the personally tested in modern music practice searches, the evolution of artistic interpretations in folklore genres and the response of the audience, Vanya Moneva also takes into account the fact that the many publications on problems related to the interpretation, create the feeling of an “exploited topic”, however *“the interpretation specifically for women's folk choir is almost unexplored territory”*, and the fact that in some publications touching indirectly the topic *“the focus of [their] research is not on problems of interpretation”*. As a person who has been researching the development of the genre “song for a folk choir” for two decades, I unconditionally agree with Mrs. Moneva's statement of on the relevance of the topic. The theoretical work is beautifully illustrated on stage through the six concerts, part of the artistic and creative doctoral studies, but also through the many unmentioned but realized public performances (creative experiments) as conductor during the dissertation training - further confirmation of the relevance of the topic.

Knowledge of the problem, characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation and contributions

The entire career of Vanya Moneva as conductor, her achievements, recordings, knowledge of the repertoire of folk choirs, folklore specifics of sound production and dialectal preconditions set by the authentic source, the audience and her preferences, etc., for decades show exceptionally practical knowledge of the issue. In this thesis, the expectations are rather on the author’s ability to systematize her experience theoretically and to “certify” with evidence her own “findings”, which she does brilliantly. The impressive number of used sources (150) is indicative of the serious theoretical basis on which Vanya Moneva builds her theoretical and practical conclusions. The use of quotations by so many authors (37) proving the correctness of certain aspects of her research is also impressive, as well as the non-standard *Alphabetical list of used citation*, giving maximum opportunity to make thematic parallels with the cited works.

Although briefly, the main characteristics of the folk choir are “outlined” in the first chapter “Folk choir - Specifics and Problems”. The selection of the most prominent conductors-interpreters in the folklore choir guild and the author's “comparative base” of parameters reveal knowledge not only on the present, but also on the impact of personal reading on the audience in the recent past. It is no coincidence that the candidate determines in her tracing of the interpretive invention the main directions that outline the most characteristic contours of the various conducting manifestations: *“psycho-emotional image of the conductor - rational... or emotional ...; interpretive decisions regarding the sound emission; interpretive decisions regarding the visual presentation; interpretive decisions regarding the genre-stylistic compilation”* [p. 22]. This is the first time in musicology that

such an evaluative "section" of the various conductors' interpretative attitudes of folk choir conductors has been made. In each chapter of the dissertation the deep theoretical and practical-applied knowledge of doctoral candidate Moneva on the research object is evident. The second chapter examines in detail the interpretation of folk choral art in its various aspects - from practical-applied "suffered" truths, to systematizing the factors that determine the specifics of the work of the conductor of a folk choir. In a sense, the "culmination" of the dissertation work is in Chapter Three, which presents the six concerts included in it, the reflections on the choice and construction of a contemporary repertoire concept, the interpretive changes due to various contemporary factors, the contemporary genre "incarnations" of the folk choir, the responsibility of adopting premiere folklore and choral works. This is where the author's contribution of the candidate is fully developed, as all judgments are the result of many successful stage "experiments".

Assessment of the publications, author's abstract and the personal contribution of the candidate

The candidate presents 2 publications on the topic of the dissertation, which covers the requirements for artistic and creative doctoral studies. They offer some of the theoretical statements clarified in detail in the dissertation, concerning the modern interpretation of songs for women's folk choir. The abstract consists of 51 pages and presents the entire scientific work in a synthesized but comprehensive form. Based on the reviewed documentation, scientific publications, dissertation and abstract, I believe that the research in this paper is entirely the work of the doctoral candidate and we can definitely assume that the dissertation of Vanya Moneva is her personal work.

Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results

I would recommend this research work to be officially published because it sheds light on the problems of interpretation in the folklore choirs – a topic that has ignored until now. I would even go further in my recommendations. I would like Mrs. Moneva to fully describe her musical observations and reflections on the interpretations for folk choir - as a continuation of the dissertation, because with her work as conductor on the Bulgarian and world stages, with her rich invention, inexhaustible energy, draws a "highway with many lanes" in the field of folklore choral interpretation and such a continuation would be extremely useful for future conductors of folk choirs.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that during her studies the doctoral candidate has carried out a serious amount of research and artistic and creative work. In addition to the high level of concerts, practically illustrating the topic, a large amount of theoretical material was synthesized, on which original results and contributions to Bulgarian musicology were obtained.

The dissertation shows that the doctoral candidate Vanya Moneva has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty Musical Art by demonstrating qualities and skills for

independent research. In the presented work there are scientific results that represent a contribution to science. The presented materials and dissertation results fully comply with the specific requirements of the Faculty of Music Folklore and Choreography, adopted in connection with the Regulations of AMDFA for application Law for the development of the academic staff in Republic of Bulgaria. Considering the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the scientific work presented in the dissertation, abstract, results and contributions, and I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree Doctor to Denitsa Vasileva in Higher education field 8. Arts, Professional field 8.3. *Music and Dance Art*.

I congratulate Vanya Moneva for the serious and in-depth artistic and scientific research. I also congratulate her academic supervisor Prof Kostadin Buradzhiev for the successful guidance and the achievement of the impressive end result.

03.05.2022

Prepared by:

(Assoc. Prof Rada Slavinska)