

REPORT

on a dissertation on the topic of

“DRAMATURGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIFICS IN THE ORNAMENTATION AND THE ARRANGEMENT OF AUTHENTIC FOLK SONGS FOR CHORAL FOLK ENSEMBLES”

for awarding the educational and scientific degree of “doctor” in the
university educational sphere of 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional specialty

1.3 Pedagogy of teaching in... (Methods of education in music) submitted by

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In the capacity of a doctoral candidate, Marek Dyakov presents his biography concisely and modestly, with an emphasis on his teaching, conducting and composing activities which is exactly where he stands in our common professional sphere. His education is connected with three academic institutions: VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", where he earned his bachelor's degree in the specialty of “Musical pedagogy” and more specifically accordion playing at the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". Further on, he earned a master's degree in the same specialty and took courses in various musical theoretical disciplines at the New Bulgarian University. Duakov`s realization as a musician includes the activity of teaching (at the National children's palace in Sofia, the “National school of the art of dancing” and was later commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture to teach music to the Bulgarian communities in Moldova and as a conductor of the “Rodolyubets” choir and later - the “Gotse Delchev” ensemble in Sofia). Dyakov is the author of compositions for various ensembles and arrangements for folklore songs, some of which have won various awards.

The dissertation work, presented by Marek Dyakov, includes a presentation of the thesis on 173 pages, a bibliographic list (143 titles, of which 6 in the Latin alphabet) and two appendices (the musical scores of the works included in the methodological model). The main text contains an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. During his work on the dissertation, the doctoral candidate has made three publications in the scientific media. The abstract is an accurate and correct reflection of the content of the entire work. The procedure for the defense of the dissertation takes place in full conformity with the requirements of the "Development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria act" (ZRASRB, Bul.) and the regulations for its implementation (PPZRASRB, Bul.)

My comment on the text must inevitably begin with the choice of the topic. Its very title creates the impression that the selection of the terms, derived from different spheres, and their connection with the subject matter of the research has not been well thought of. It looks more like a sort of patchwork. "Musical dramaturgy" and "specificity of ornamentation" are problems on different levels and they relate to different degrees and in different ways to such a phenomenon as "processing authentic folklore songs" (today's ethnomusicology rejects the term "authentic folklore" altogether when applied to traditional country music). Even more puzzling is the connection of such a topic with the professional sphere and direction of activity which the dissertation purports to adhere to ("Pedagogy of musical education"). I am saying this because the choice of a topic for a dissertation should not be a personal decision taken by the doctoral candidate only. It should have been corrected by the team of lecturers and - in this particular case - the general feeling is that this is a case of "mission impossible".

At the very beginning of the present report, however, I will say that the doctoral candidate succeeds in fulfilling this mission by basing the entire research on his own experience in composing music and - this is of particular importance - in making good use of his personal experience as a musical conductor and tutor.

In the first chapter of the dissertation - "Folklore choirs and the genre of processing folklore songs" - Marek Dyakov makes every effort to clearly outline the object of his research in terms of its history, related terminology and content and to raise the foundations for his further studies in the field. The chapter has a decidedly preparatory character and it becomes clear to the reader that the doctoral candidate perceives the area of his interests as that of a practitioner and as somebody whose theoretical experience is a fruit growing on the soil of Bulgarian choral art.

The key word here is "art" - a fact which allows the candidate to erect the construction of the next chapter ("Music dramaturgy in the songs for folklore choirs - theoretical aspects") - and with its help to make the results from his studies truly convincing. Marek Dyakov manages to avoid the pitfalls, embedded in the title, by bringing out and completing the missing links "around the ornamentation", thus making it reasonable to place the term "art" in the area of a more complex, vague and ambiguous concept called "musical dramaturgy". Via a survey of the views expressed by a number of eminent authors on the problems posed by taking such a position, he chooses an appropriate content of the term used in his research and thus steps on two important supports. The first stems from the very understanding of the term "processing for a folklore choir" as part of a compositional, professional practice aimed at stage performances which is why the adoption of musical dramaturgy, as a sought-after "interaction between the semantic connections in the structure and the organization of the musical material" (p. 42), is well substantiated. The second support is the conviction in the still existing, generative and sought-after roots of this practice in the old rural folklore and, more specifically, in the syncretic relationship between the verbal text and the melody of traditional music. From this point on, the chapter traces the chosen musical means of expression in the relations between word and music in the original source (the "authentic song"), used in its processing as well as the modal characteristics, the harmonic and polyphonic approaches; dynamics, tempo, form creation, sound extraction and ornamentation. Each of these means of expression is described, 1) as ensuing from the "original" and in comparison with its a) musical and b) music and verbal characteristics, and 2) as its relation to musical drama being the result of the processor's personal choice - consciously or not - but invariably conforming to the "original". Given the general inclination of all who work in this sphere to constantly describe their work as "folkloric" (that is, as close as possible to traditional music), such a position has its explanation. At the same time, it is necessary to point out some quite subtle and in-depth observations made by the doctoral candidate regarding the mutual determination of the various means of expression in the specific picture of the female folklore choir (with its limitations on range, timbre, dynamics and vocal-technical capacities). The argumentation of certain "choices made by the composer" rests on a serious, in-depth knowledge of the available repertoire.

Chapter three presents the same means of musical expression directed toward the construction of musical drama but this time they are discussed in relation to the work of the conductor. In this way, and by turning to similar works elaborated by established

names in the field (such as Maria Kuteva, Ivan Velez, Vasilka Spasova and Dora Hristova) as well as having the support of his own practical experience, Marek Dyakov offers a concrete model of a conducting methodology for exploring a new repertoire with the folklore choir. By seeking a convincing dramaturgical construction of each new musical piece for its performance on stage in actuality, this model pursues a wider range of goals. It is also aimed at perceiving and realizing the work of the conductor as the work of a music teacher. The rehearsal and educational work on each of the elements of the dramaturgy, discussed in the previous chapter, is methodically arranged in six steps containing specific individual objectives and the underlying methodological concepts for the path to their achievement. In its practical part, the model is demonstrated via the example of a rehearsal work in the process of studying two specific songs (included in the appendix to the dissertation, namely - "Polegnala e Tudora" (*Tudora is in for a nap*) by Philip Kutev and "Hard times" by the candidate himself - which present two different types of processing in relation to the means of musical dramaturgy (defined by the doctoral candidate with the adoption of Levando's systematics as free and extended processing). Due to the main task of the entire dissertation, the specific step in this methodology is left for further analysis, correct assimilation and implementation of the ornaments which, by necessity, have turned out to be an important part of the musical dramaturgy of these songs. Issues, such as the function of the ornamentation in the arrangements, its dependence on the musical and dialectal features of the original song, its relationship to the type of sound extraction in the respective locality, the need to convert it into a fixed text, etc., are considered in greater depth.

The third and fourth chapters are precisely aimed at the placement of the text in the professional area of "Pedagogy of musical education". They also fulfill the requirement for approving the proposed conducting and pedagogical model. Firstly, through the self-reflection of the acquired personal experience in the course of its application in school education embedded in its very creation and secondly via its approbation through qualitative research carried out through survey-interview of selected experts from the same professional sphere who are able to evaluate it on the basis of their own practical experience (this has necessitated their grouping into three different expert groups). Chapter four of the dissertation is devoted to the presentation of this "external" approbation and its results which, at the same time, outlines a group of authorities recognized within Marek Dyakov's professional field and provokes the presentation of a kind of panoramic outline of their views

It is only too normal to emphasize that the dissertation text is not without problems. One is impressed by the fact, for example, of the complete lack of reference (chapter one) to sources from the history of the specific phenomenon of "folklore choirs". This creates the impression that the research made on the issue is insufficient and that we are reading some kinds of an essayistic retelling of well known "common truths". In fact, one direct result is the multiplication of myths surrounding the very creation of the State Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances and the varying visions of its profile accumulated over the decades in numerous publications most often originating from the socialist media and the press. For example, on the basis of the documents made available only recently the falsehood of the statement that "Filip Kutev and his team literally travel all over the country in search for the most outstanding musical masters " has been proven (p. 23). The fact is that as early as 1951 a competition, held in Sofia, was announced and in the initial composition of the choir singers and players from all over Bulgaria were far from being represented on an equal footing. In addition, according to these documents, Philip Kutev himself does not see his newly created DANPT (*State ensemble for folk songs and dancing*, Bul.) as a copy of the "Pyatnitsky" model. The first repertoire of this choir also differs from the one described on the same page of the dissertation.

Another problem can be found in some instances where the author comments on the musical characteristics of the arrangements comparing them with their prototypes: sometimes he overlooks the need to apply specific terminology to traditional music. For example, on pg. 82 he writes: "For the most part, the authentic Bulgarian folk song has the one-part form, made up of periods or sentences with a repeated construction (literally in most cases). Exceptions to this rule can most often be noticed in meterless songs, where within one and the same verse we find several different periods or sentences...". From the point of view of ethnomusicology, however, the use of the term "authentic folk song" is also a problem as well as the assertion of the existence of periods, sentences or couplets among its forms. These terms are purposefully avoided by musical folklorists and ethnomusicologists in order to emphasize the different nature of the traditional songs, the forms of which are defined (according to Djudjev), on the basis of the structure of their verbal text. Inaccurate also is the definition of the regional differences in the ornaments which are described as "ethnographical specifics". The achievements in ethnography have only an indirect relation to the understanding of musical ornamentation. The interpretation of ornamentation is an element of the studies of regional musical styles and, in effect, what we are actually discussing is the issue of dialectal specificities in music.

Other similar examples can also be cited and for the further improvement of the text it will be of benefit to the author to familiarize himself in greater depth with the works of our established researchers so as to correct and remove such shortcomings. However, the important thing here is that this can be done without damaging the overall structure of the dissertation, which is unwavering and persuasive in relation to the topic. And - most importantly - it has its own real contributions to this area of research which are primarily related to the specific way in which the dissertation follows the practice-theory-practice process. The research view taken in the direction of constructing the musical dramaturgy appears fruitful for the interpretation of the a cappella songs for folklore choirs and the created methodological model for the rehearsal process does, indeed, possess the potential to enrich the existing practices.

Therefore, I propose to the honorable Scientific jury to award Marek Dyakov the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor".

08.05.2023

Signature: