

## REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Penka Ilieva Marcheva  
(VTU "St. Cyril and St. Methodius"),  
Professional Field 1.3. Pedagogy of Music Education  
For the procedure for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor",  
Area of Higher Education: Pedagogical Sciences,  
Professional Field 1.3. Pedagogy of Music Education  
At SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"

**Dissertation Title:** *"The Specificity of Working with Children's Musicals in Preschool Groups in Kindergarten"*

**PhD Candidate:** Evgenia Petrova Vitanova

**Scientific Supervisor:** Prof. Dr. Ganka Nedelcheva-Boyanova

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### 1. Data on the PhD Candidate

Evgenia Vitanova graduated from NUI "Dobri Hristov" in Varna with two specializations – piano and classical singing. She earned a Bachelor's degree from two faculties of the National Academy of Music "Pancho Vladigerov" – Vocal and Theoretical-Compositional and Conducting. Her resume shows that she completed three Master's programs: "Primary School Pedagogy" at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski," "Innovations in Preschool Education" at Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski," and "Music Pedagogy" at the same university. Evgenia Vitanova's educational development demonstrates a consistent and purposeful advancement in her realization as a music educator. Her extensive professional resume as a teacher in various educational institutions (kindergartens and schools) suggests relevant experience related to the content of her dissertation.

### 2. Data on the Doctoral Studies

By order of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski," No. RD 38-349 from 02.07.2024, a procedure was initiated for the defense of a dissertation on the topic: "The Specificity of Working with Children's Musicals in Preschool Groups in Kindergarten," developed by PhD candidate Evgenia Petrova Vitanova. The doctoral studies include a dissertation, an abstract, three articles on the topic, a protocol, and a statement from the scientific supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ganka Nedelcheva-Boyanova, related to the procedure for preventing plagiarism, as well as a reference for meeting the scientometric indicators for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field "Pedagogy of Music Education."

At the first session of the National Jury (NJ), held on 12.07.2024, a chairperson, two reviewers, and members were appointed to prepare opinions, follow deadlines in the procedure, and set the date for the second concluding session. Concerning the conduct of the competition, it can be reasonably claimed that all requirements outlined in national and internal university regulations have been met so far.

### **3. Data on the Dissertation and Abstract**

#### **Volume and Structure**

Structurally, the dissertation<sup>1</sup> consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, contributions (according to the author), a bibliography<sup>2</sup>, and three appendices<sup>3</sup>.

In this part of the review, I note the relatively small volume of the main text of the dissertation, which includes many images and figures. I also emphasize the limited scientific literature included in the bibliography. Some key works and publications related to the topic<sup>4</sup> are not discussed, which is a significant omission by the PhD candidate. Notably, none of the sources listed in the bibliography are cited in a manner appropriate for a dissertation. Two of the sources in the bibliography are normative documents, and I note the use of educational literature for students, such as "Hadzhiev P. Elementary Theory of Music. Music Publishing House – Sofia, 1976." The scientific literature that should form the foundation of the dissertation is very limited and almost unused. For example, source No. 4: Valchinova-Chendova, E. "The New Bulgarian Music in Recent Decades," Institute of Art Studies – BAS, Sofia, 2004, is listed in the bibliography but not in the content. Similar observations apply to other titles in the bibliography. The entire text is not written in the style of a dissertation but has a more descriptive, popular-scientific character.

#### **Theoretical and Practical Foundations of the Study**

The dissertation "The Specificity of Working with Children's Musicals in Preschool Groups in Kindergarten" presents an attempt to test a model through a pedagogical study. The introduction outlines the main parameters of the dissertation. I accept the tasks, object, and subject, but the goal is formulated too generally and is uninformative.

In the first chapter of the dissertation (paragraphs 1.1. and 1.2.), the historical aspect of the development of the musical as a genre is discussed. The presence of children's musicals in the practice of Bulgarian theatrical and vocal formations is presented. The place of this genre in kindergartens is examined from the last decade of the 20th century to the second

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<sup>1</sup> The total volume is 165 pages, of which 138 are main text and 25 pages are appendices.

<sup>2</sup> The bibliography contains 24 sources, all in Cyrillic. It includes 22 internet sources, most of which are on YouTube.

<sup>3</sup> In Appendix №1, as stated by the dissertation author, 'Titles of musicals and various categorizations of children's musical instruments' are included. Appendix №2 contains photographic material of children's musical instruments and programs of musicals for kindergartens, implemented in the candidate's practice for the competition. Appendix №3 contains an original script of a musical for a kindergarten, written in 2020.

<sup>4</sup> For example: Stavri Angelov's dissertation 'Bulgarian Musical-Theatrical Creativity for Children in the Second Half of the 20th Century. Typological and Genre Characteristics. Theatrical Participation' (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2016); Bix, Rozalia, Aneliya Yaneva, Romyana Karakostova, Miglena Tsenova-Nusheva, Emilia Zhunic. Bulgarian Musical Theater. Volume IV. Opera. Ballet. Operetta. Musical. 1890-2010. Reviews, Feedback, Comments. Bulgaria: Sofia: Gea Libris, 2015 (Co-authors: Bix, Rozalia, Aneliya Yaneva, Romyana Karakostova, Miglena Tsenova-Nusheva, Emilia Zhunic); Krasimira Tsutsumanova's dissertation 'The Children's Musical in the Work of Bulgarian Composers from the Second Half of the 20th Century and the Beginning of the 21st Century (Problems in Vocal Interpretation by Child Performers)' (South-West University, 2020) and others.

decade of the 21st century. Nowhere in this historical-cultural panorama are the sources from which Evgenia Vitanova draws her information visible.

Paragraphs 1.2.2. and 1.2.3. contain the motivation and challenges of working with musicals in kindergarten, which show the practical dimensions of this activity. These dimensions are supported by the rich pedagogical work of the PhD candidate. The practical applicability of musicals, both in kindergarten and in the early educational stage, is clearly present in the other paragraphs of the first chapter of the dissertation (paragraphs 1.3, 1.4., 1.5., and 1.6.). I would especially highlight paragraphs 1.2.3. and 1.6.2., which describe the challenges of working with this genre with preschool and early school children and possible solutions, which I find interesting and valuable.

The second chapter, titled "Stages of Work in a Kindergarten Musical," details the technology involving activities related to including the musical in the kindergarten repertoire. The stages – initial, main, and final – are thoroughly described, tracing in detail the process of creating and implementing a children's musical with preschool children. The entire chapter again demonstrates the rich pedagogical experience of the candidate in the competition.

The third chapter focuses on the means by which the musical is realized in kindergarten, namely children's musical instruments, costumes, and sets. In paragraph 3.1. "Musical-Hearing Perceptions and Creative Development in Preschool Groups," scientific sources are again lacking on one of the key components of musicality – musical-hearing perceptions. There is also a tendency to use scientific sources that are not present in the bibliography. For example, on page 80, a monograph "Music and English Language: An Integrated Approach to Forming a Creative Generation" by E. Kabakova is mentioned. Such a source is missing from the bibliography. The entire third chapter is descriptive. Some paragraphs, such as 3.1.5. "Procurement of Children's Musical Instruments Used in Kindergarten Musicals," 3.2.2. "Procurement of Costumes Used in Kindergarten Musicals," and others, lack scientific value.

The fourth chapter is devoted to experimental work on the topic. It is carried out in three stages, called phases by the PhD candidate. On page 104, the organization and content of the research part of the dissertation are presented in tabular form. This is followed by a detailed description of the activities in each stage. The pedagogical research methods and didactic tools used are thoroughly described, which proves the professional experience of the PhD candidate as a music educator.

What stands out is the presentation of the results only in tabular form. There is almost no qualitative or quantitative analysis, or if there is, it is very brief and does not reveal the content of the research process or the analytical and synthetic skills of the PhD candidate. The educational content for the 3rd group in the first situation (pp. 115-119) needs serious refinement, as children at this age do not work with concepts such as major and minor, and this should be well known by the PhD candidate<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mon.bg/regulation/naredba-%e2%84%96-5-ot-03-06-2016-g-za-preduchilisthnoto-obrazovanie/>

I recommend moving the numerous images to appendices.

The submitted abstract corresponds to the structure and content of the dissertation. The articles included in the competition documentation are related to its nature.

### **Recommendations**

I recommend substantial revision of the submitted material. The theoretical foundation must be established by including a separate chapter on the essence of the musical and its genre, based entirely on established scientific sources. I emphasize the need to expand the bibliography with publications of proven scientific value. Attention should be paid to the lack of cited authoritative opinions, as well as to the derived conclusions and generalizations based on them. It is essential to include a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results, revealing the PhD candidate's capabilities in this direction. I also point out the need for refining the educational content in music included in the research activity. The contributions also need refinement. Based on my critical remarks so far, which also apply to them, I will summarize my assessment (numbered in sequence):

1. I do not accept Contribution No. 1: "The historical experience with the musical genre, including the children's musical, is traced, which for the first time is examined in a new perspective as a basis for the emergence of a new genre through possible transformations." To recognize such a contribution, serious scientific historical sources must be used, which still need to be added to the work.
2. I do not accept Contribution No. 2: "New concepts are introduced for the first time – 'kindergarten musical,' 'author's musical fairy tale,' and 'digital audio fairy tale' with their terminological characteristics and specific content." The phrase "kindergarten musical" does not carry the meaning of a concept, as the musical should not be tied only to an educational institution but to a specific audience – in this case, children. "Author's musical fairy tale" is a popular term.
3. Contribution No. 3: "For the first time in pedagogical practice, a methodological model for working with a kindergarten musical is proposed" is not convincing, as there are others<sup>6</sup>
4. I accept Contribution No. 4 on the classification of non-traditional children's musical instruments and recommend illustrating it with a diagram.
5. I accept Contribution No. 5 as practically applicable after correcting the content inaccuracies.

### **Conclusion**

The observations, findings, and recommendations outlined give grounds to propose that the presented dissertation be returned for revision under Article 11 (3) of the Law on the

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<sup>6</sup> e.g., the dissertation of Krasimira Tsutsumanova on "The Children's Musical in the Works of Bulgarian Composers from the Second Half of the 20th Century and the Beginning of the 21st Century (Problems in Vocal Interpretation by Child Performers)" (South-West University, 2020).

Development of the Academic Staff in Bulgaria and the current SU Rules for its implementation. I refrain from proposing to the members of the NJ to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Evgenia Vitanova in the field of Higher Education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Field: 1.3 Pedagogy of Music Education.

**Date:** September 5, 2024

**Prepared by:** Prof. Dr. Penka Marcheva