

## **OPINION**

by Prof. Dr. Boryana Lambreva

NMA "Prof. P. Vladigerov ", professional field: 8.3. "Music and dance"

on the doctoral work of Anna Petrova-Forster

### **The Unknown European Piano Music of the Second Half of the 18th and Early 19th Centuries.**

for awarding the educational and scientific "Doctor's" degree  
in the professional field: 8.3. "Music and dance"

PhD student Anna Petrova-Forster is a pianist and teacher, as can be seen from the enclosed documentation, with extensive concert, recording, theoretical and teaching activities, mainly aimed at discovering and promoting unknown areas in the field of piano music. Having laid the foundations of her musical education in Bulgaria, Anna Forster furthered her musical studies at the high music schools in Geneva and Lucerne, as well as in the master classes of eminent musicians such as Stanislav Neuhaus, Ivan Moravec and Jürgen Uhde. A professional with a mission to which she purposefully subdues her performances and searches, Anna Forster has numerous appearances as a soloist and chamber musician on stages in Europe, America and Japan. Her six published CDs are dedicated to the works of unknown composers

of the 18th and 19th centuries. She is a teacher with many years of experience in several educational institutions in Switzerland.

The PhD student's interest in the little-known piano works of the Classical and Early Romantic periods is obviously long-standing, and over the years she has approached the topic of this dissertation step by step. Her many contributions as performer and theorist reflect her lasting interest in forgotten composers who have remained in the shadow of their famous colleagues over time.

The main and strongest impression that the present work leaves is the author's deep and sincere commitment to the topic, her desire and strong personal motivation to explore it fully, considering the issues from almost all possible angles and perspectives. So far in Bulgaria there has not been such a thorough elaboration on this subject and Anna Forster's dissertation will definitely arouse the interest in the composers under consideration, as well as will help to promote their work in our country. The presence of a large amount of literature cited and used by the author, such as a bibliography (120 sources in Bulgarian, Russian, German, French and English), links to websites and sound recordings, which enable anyone interested in the subject to acquire the necessary information, will also contribute to this.

The work contains an immense amount of data that is difficult to process and assimilate all at once; it can be used as an indispensable desktop reference - a detailed and comprehensive guide, a document of the era and its little-known piano output.

The dissertation "*Unknown European Piano Music from the Second Half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*" has a total length of 230 pages, organized in an Introduction, five chapters, a Conclusion, a list of cited literature, and three appendices containing: a list of CDs by the doctoral student, radio broadcasts, and You Tube recordings. As already mentioned, the bibliography includes 120 titles in several languages, which are correctly presented and which the author uses well, organically weaving them into the text to illustrate and argue her claims. The analysis of the selected piano works, in most cases comparative, is supported by dozens of musical examples.

Already in the Introduction Anna Forster clearly formulates **the main aim** of the dissertation, namely: "*to present unknown, now forgotten piano works and their creators, and to highlight their high professional level*". The knowledge gained in her practical work as a performer and teacher is a natural basis for the successful realization of this idea. The lack of studies on

similar topics in Bulgarian, and on the other hand the few competent performers of this music in our country, further motivate the author and prove the timeliness of the scientific research.

In line with the main idea is also the task that the candidate sets herself - to collect, organize and clarify a large volume of scattered and difficult to find information from various sources and archives about the life and work of many composers whose traces have been lost over the years. In her work she examines, where more fully and in detail, where only touching, the writings of almost thirty composers, most of them little known even to closely profiled musicians. In the various chapters of her thesis, the author analyses the work of composers living and working in Germany, Austria, France and England. Along with this, she introduces us to the processes in the art of piano playing, the creation and perfection of the new instrument pianoforte, with its varieties and possibilities, which in turn reflects on the development of the performing arts, expressed by the emergence of the first itinerant virtuoso performers - predecessors of Liszt, Paganini, Chopin. It is also interesting to trace the historical picture of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in different countries, against the background of which Anna Forster introduces us to the musical circles, their manners, tastes and preferences.

An important part of the analysis of the works of the composers under consideration is related to the origin of some of the genres of the art of piano performance - here we learn about the creation of the first technical exercises, etudes, impromptus, nocturnes, the first examples of the romantic concerto genre. Often this information is confronted with what exists as generally accepted factology in music history and theory to date and is another important element in outlining the contributing nature of the present dissertation. I cannot fail to mention the information made available to the reader about the catalogues of most of the analyzed composers, where are brought together their works discovered up to the present, as well as their letters and theoretical writings. Thanks to this, as well as to the works of their researchers and biographers, today we have the opportunity to learn about methods of teaching, performing and composing of such piano masters as Steibelt, Woelfl, Clementi and Kalkbrenner, to learn about the life and creative path of quite a few women composers of that time who lived mainly in France. And through analyses of their works, new interrelations and interpretations of the works of famous composers such as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, etc., are revealed, as well as the strong influence that some of the works of the artists studied in this dissertation had on them.

Regarding the level of knowledge of the issues at hand, I have to say that I am impressed by Anna Petrova-Forster's extensive knowledge and erudition, which help to present the issues in a multilayered and thorough way/ in many layers and in depth. She bases her research and analyses on an extremely large volume of scientific, epistolary, and musical literature, examines and studies a number of works in the world theoretical space, as well as a large number of keyboard works that to one degree or another reflect various aspects of the topic. Anna Forster has carried out this multi-year and in-depth work in a focused and channeled manner in order to reduce the thousands of pages read to the information presented in this dissertation.

I would especially like to mention the excellent language in which the work is written. The expression is precise, clear, concise, it says the most important things with ease, devoid of clutter and unnecessary use of foreign words, the narrative is engaging and allows entering the issues to be easy and imperceptible. Alongside this, I welcome the completeness and correctness in presenting full information in the footnotes, which introduce us to the titles of books, documents and quoted texts in their original language.

I agree with the contributions of the dissertation outlined at the end of the paper, namely:

- For the first time in Bulgarian musicology, unknown works from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries are examined, highlighting the contribution of forgotten, now unknown composers to the development of piano art. The analysis of their music is relevant to a deeper understanding of the music of famous composers of this era.
- The emergence of the early romantic style in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is demonstrated.
- The development of performance practice during this period is analyzed.
- Previously unknown facts are presented related to the biographies of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven and Daniel Steibelt.
- Corrections, based on many years of research, are made to inaccuracies or errors in the biographies of the authors under consideration.
- The unknown piano pieces included in the text enrich the modern pedagogical practice and contribute to the study of various pianistic techniques typical for the period of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- There are concert performances and CD recordings of the unknown musical works in question, given by the author.

Taking into account the high contribution of the dissertation, the detailed and thorough analysis of the composers and their works, the high style of presenting the information and the fact that a study with such volume and depth of research has not been done before in our theoretical space, I recommend that the dissertation "The Unknown European Piano Music of the Second Half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries" be published in a book form so that it can be used as a timeless and necessary reference by pupils and students as well as by teachers. The presented piano repertoire can serve in the pedagogical and concert practice for the pianists in Bulgaria.

The PhD student has the following publications on the topic:

1. 1. The first travelling virtuoso pianists. - In: *Bulgarian Musicology*, 2013, № 3 - 4, pp. 116 - 133.
2. Virtuosos or charlatans. - In: *Violin Key*, (St. Petersburg), 2014, No. 2, pp. 31-36.
3. Three Portraits or the Riddle of Karl Reichel. - In: *Violin Key*, (St. Petersburg), 2019, No. 1, pp. 34-36 (about Daniel Steibelt).
4. Daniel Steibelt in the history of piano music (the last decades of the 18th and early 19th centuries). - In: *Bulgarian Musicology*, 2020, No. 4, pp. 3 - 29,

as well as three papers in scientific conferences held and organized by the NBU, and another three papers that are in print in music-theoretical journals in Paris and St. Petersburg. To these are added four booklets to CDs published by the doctoral student:

1. August Alexander Klengel. CD, Trio Klengel: Anna Petrova-Forster, piano, Keiko Yamaguchi, violin, Stefania Veritá, cello, Toccata Classics, London, 2018.
2. Daniel Steibelt. Piano works. Anna Petrova-Forster, piano, CD, Gega New, 2012.
3. Diagnosis: Wunderkind. Works by composers who died young. Anna Petrova-Forster, piano, CD, Baby, USA, 2016.
4. The Birth of the Etude. Anna Petrova-Forster, piano, Toccata Classics, London, 2020.

In support of all that has been said so far, I give the following opinion - according to the LAW ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA, the candidate meets the national scientific requirements for obtaining the degree of Doctor of Education and Science. The dissertation has indisputable scientific and applied contributions and qualities and testifies that the PhD candidate possesses a thorough knowledge of the topic

and a high scientific style. All this gives me reason to propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Anna Petrova-Forster the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in the professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art.

Sofia  
29. 03. 2021

Prof. Dr. Boryana Lambreva  
/...../