

OPINION

on the dissertation of

Anna Petrova-Forster

(PhD student in self-study in the doctoral program "Music", NBU, with
Scientific adviser: Prof. Dr. Sc. Elisaveta Valchinova-Chendova

on the topic

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
(professional field: 8.3. "Music and dance")

by Prof. Dr. Evgenia Mihailova Simeonova

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I am extremely impressed by the scope and depth of Anna Petrova-Forster's research work. Only a musician with an excellent academic theoretical background, erudition, extensive concert experience as a performer with an ascending creative development, a searching professional is able to write this excellent thesis. It is no coincidence that the colleague has taken her place in the cultural life of Switzerland, also as an educator. From the enclosed biography and the author's text, we have before us a professional classical musician with wide interests, invention, perseverance and breadth of search for all her conceptual creative conceptions. Many of the analyzed works are present in her repertoire. The conclusions drawn are the result of her active concert activity and the path taken by the interpreter and the theorist towards these "forgotten" works. The serious research is based on documentary sources and the author has been up to date with publications on the subject in Europe for many years. She compares scores, searches for and reads manuscripts, and provides facts and evidence, bearing in mind that *many of the old editions and archives have been discarded, deemed unnecessary.*

Gradually the distorted puzzle of historical truth is being revealed. With skill and argumentation A. Petrova-Forster refutes some mechanically layered over the years assessments of artists from the distant for us era.

The presented doctoral dissertation '**THE UNKNOWN EUROPEAN PIANO MUSIC OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURY**' is structured in an introduction, five chapters spread over 230 pp. with music examples from rare editions.

The author's performance work during her PhD is fully illustrated (it is a representative sample of her many years of interest in the subject). The bibliography is respectable with 121 titles in Bulgarian, Russian, English, French and German, including a siteography. The candidate has dutifully noted all the citations, and has made her own translations of texts from several European languages of which she is proficient.

In the introduction to the work A. Petrova-Forster clearly defines the aim, subject and task of the research. The guiding idea is to rehabilitate valuable music by the so-called 'little masters', who were in fact capable and educated musicians. Often incorrectly repeated facts about them have shifted the true appreciation of their talent and creativity in the wrong direction (Steibelt, Clementi and many others).

In the **first chapter** of the dissertation '**THE UNKNOWN EUROPEAN PIANO MUSIC**

OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURY. SCHOOLS AND INFLUENCES' are traced interesting facts of the evolutionary development of the pianoforte instrument, its spread in different European countries, and the processes in piano art of this period.

Chapter two deals with composers who worked in **GERMANY**. **Subchapter 2.1.** introduces the first composers who wrote for the new instrument pianoforte (Johann Gottfried Mützel, Leopold Mozart, Friedrich Wilhelm Rust); the appearance of the signs p, poco p, pp, poco forte, f, ff, the alternating f - poco p - p which replaced the crescendo sign (in three Sonatas by Mützel). In **subchapter 2.2.** works by Friedrich Rust, well known to the author, are skillfully analyzed. The chapter is devoted to the first itinerant virtuoso pianists who played an important role in the development of the European piano playing tradition, to the duel encounters between distinguished musicians (Mozart and Clementi; Steibelt and Beethoven). The contribution to the art of the piano playing by the now forgotten Ludwig Berger, August Alexander Klengel, Daniel Steibelt ¹ is also highlighted (of all the signs he created, only the sign* for lifting the pedal remains today - p. 79), Johann Böhner ². The topic of everyday life and organization (management) of the concert events from the researched period, the copyrights, the establishment of the pension fund (Hummel), the musical charlatanry, the piano etudes by Steibelt, Cramer and Berger, and women in music are all still relevant today. Of interest is the search for the author of the so-called nostalgic waltz (longing waltz) or the mourning waltz (Sehnsuchtswalzer), known in various variants. Believed to have been written by Henneberg, Beethoven or Schubert, it was actually composed by the 'forgotten' composer Sixtus Bachmann (pp. 103-105).

Chapter three, 'COMPOSERS WHO WORKED IN AUSTRIA' (chapters two and three are a kind of centre of the doctoral thesis), focuses on Vienna, the city of music and Clavierland, as Mozart admiringly called it, and the multinational musical environment of Austrians of German origin, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Italians - all subjects of the Austrian Empire. Valuable information leads us to the great work of Johann Baptist Wanhal, Leopold Kozeluch³, Jan Voříšek, and Josef Antonin Steffan. The doctoral student also introduces us to Joseph Woelfl, with whom Beethoven himself played the 4 hands, and

¹ The PhD student released 2 CDs with his works.

² An interesting parallel is drawn between Böhner's etudes and Brahms' exercises.

³ I read with interest the student's PhD research on his work. As a performer, together with the pianist Desislava Shtereva, I am familiar with the Piano Concerto for 4 hands by Kozeluch, performed for the first time in Bulgaria by our duo with the Chamber Orchestra of Gabrovo and conductor Ivan Stoyanov.

Woelfl dedicated Beethoven his Three Piano Sonatas Op. 6. Other piano works are also analytically presented, such as etudes, 'Sonata in C minor, preceded by introduction and fugue'.

Composers Johann Fuss and Nikolaus von Krufft (known to French horn players for his Sonata for French Horn and Piano) are commented in subchapters. Also of interest are Krufft's 24 Preludes and Fugues in all keys, 3 Capriccios op. 33. Thus *knowing their works, we get a new idea of the environment in which Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert lived* (p. 139).

The **fourth chapter** covers '**COMPOSERS WHO WORKED IN FRANCE**', highlighting the names of Leontzi Honnauer, Ignaz Ladurner⁴, Hyacinthe Jadin, Alexandre Boëly, Hélène de Montgeroult⁵, Johann Eckard, Jean-François Tapray, and Jean-Jacques Beauvarlet-Charpentier. The historical facts about the dynamic signs, the range of instruments of the period, the pedal and fingering signs used are interesting.

In **sub-chapter 4.1.** the relationship and influence of the composer Johann Schobert on W. A. Mozart and Beethoven are sought. **Sub-chapter 4.3.** introduces us to the musical life of France and the various societies organizing concerts, as well as the establishment of the first Conservatoire in 1784 under the name of École Royale de Chant et de Declamation.

The work of Friedrich Kalkbrenner, analyzed in **sub-chapter 4.7.**, has points of contact with that of Chopin. Liszt valued his 'Piano Method for Piano' with its use of the wrist rest. A. Petrova-Forster makes an interesting reference to the well-known to us Charles-Louis Hannon's technical exercises which are similar to Kalkbrenner's method. Almost a century later some exercises of Alfred Cortot also resemble those of Kalkbrenner.

If we can summarize the musical picture in England in the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries in **Chapter Five, 'PIANO MUSIC IN ENGLAND'**, I will humorously repeat the PhD student's quote that *the English love music but it does not love them back* (p. 190)⁶. They have been criticized that everyone studies music, not to gain knowledge, but because it is considered good manners to spend money on this art and to study with a famous artist as a teacher (p. 197).

⁴ In his Sonatas Op. 4, the doctoral student finds for the first time the device of silent key-holding, which only reappears in works by composers of the 20th century.

⁵ She is also the author of a Method on piano playing.

⁶ *Mooser*, Robert Aloys. Souvenirs. Genève, Georg Editeur, 1994, p. 14.

Emphasis of the research in **subchapter 5.1.** is the work of Johann Samuel Schroeter, dedicated only to the piano. A. Petrova-Forster makes an important clarification about the mistake that still exists, made by the publisher Hummel, who reprinted as the first part of Schroeter's sonata № 1 part of the Sonata in C major by the Italian composer Baldassare Gallupi. For many years this fact has created an ambiguous attitude towards Schroeter with wrong suspicions of plagiarism.

The role of the Italian Muzio Clementi in the development of English and European music is also examined. As a pianist, I was pleased to read the PhD student's notes on the well-known etudes of Johann Baptist Cramer, and on the work of the talented George Pinto. It is noteworthy that these are foreigners who found in England the best opportunity for professional realization.

In **conclusion**, I fully agree with A. Petrova-Forster and her long concert and pedagogical experience that *fellow musicians and audiences often prefer to perform and listen to composers whose works are already emotionally and mentally assimilated, while any new, unfamiliar artistic world requires a serious attitude, more energy and time to understand.*

I fully accept and admire the contributions of the dissertation. They are clearly outlined in 7 points. The **5 CDs released by reputable companies, radio broadcasts, recordings on the Internet** and the overall 'enlightening' performance activity and theoretical activity of the PhD student on the subject are also worthy of respect.

Last but not least, I would like to congratulate the supervisor of the PhD student Anna Petrova-Forster – Prof. Dr. Sc. Elisaveta Valchinova-Chendova, one of the most respected names in Bulgarian musicology.

In conclusion:

Everything said in this opinion and my high evaluation of the proposed work give me reason to express my positive assessment of Anna Petrova-Forster. I strongly suggest that the esteemed members of the scientific jury award her the educational and scientific degree of "**doctor**".

22.03.2021

Signature:

Prof. Dr. Evgenia Simeonova