

OPINION

By

Prof. Dr. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak, Lecturer at AMTII "prof. Assen Diamandiev", Plovdiv in the professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, academic field of Musicology and Music Art for

Topic of the dissertation:

"Interpretative Problems in the Lyrics of the Songs by Johannes Brahms – word and tone"

Ardiana Bytyqi-Ismajli

(Form of doctoral studies: Independent. Programme/Department: Music.)

for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Education and Science** in the professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art,

with research supervisor **Prof. Dr. Ermila Sekulinova-Schweizer**

The Scientific Jury was appointed by Order No. 3-RK-175 / 07.04.2023

The dissertation of doctoral student Adriana Bytyqi-Ismajli on

"Interpretative Problems in the Lyrics of the Songs by Johannes Brahms" is developed in accordance with the normative requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**", containing an **introduction, three parts, conclusion, contributions, and publications** on the topic, presented in **102 pages**. The relevant three parts of the development are titled as follows: 1. Life and work of Johannes Brahms, 2. Discussion, 3. Some interpretative views on Brahms' Zigeunerlieder op. 103. The study demonstrates Dr. Bytyqi's capacity for thorough and precise research. The research text is based on references to 72 correctly referenced sources. 14

examples are also presented. I would like to emphasize the relevance of the chosen topic as well as the thorough knowledge of the researched problem.

I found the approach of analysing interpretations of various songs by Brahms, performed by prominent chamber singers, very interesting. In analysing the unification of text - voice, the dissertation highlights the essential pattern of "*linguistic knowledge in the interpretation of a song...*" (p. 3 of the Abstract) . Speech and singing participate as simple elements in the system of building and achieving vocal mastery, elements that need to be understood and differentiated. The main differences between singing and speech are of acoustic, physiological, psychological and technical nature; they generate most of the problems arising in the performance process. Through singing we convey the content embedded in a piece of music. For good phrasing, it is of great importance to know the language in which one is singing, or at least to know its phonetic peculiarities. In her dissertation, Adriana Bytyqi highlights the important role of the text in Johannes Brahms's works, as well as the importance of the knowledge of language and the specificity of the poetic text, which is a solid basis for the elaboration of the overall compositional structure of the individual works.

The third part of the study, entitled 'Discussion', offers us reflections on the difficulties of performing Brahms's songs, which are explored in several aspects in the overall analysis. The songs presented are 'Liebestreu', 'Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer' and 'Sapphische Ode' and 'Zigeunerlieder op. 103', a cycle consisting of 8 songs.

A number of interpretive issues are explored, with the importance of the poetic text and its role in the construction of musical forms and structures being significant. Bytyqi specifically selects those examples from Brahms's oeuvre written in "*...the form of a strophic song, composed exceptionally well by Brahms*" (p.12, abstract) The main aim of the study is to clarify the importance of the language of the performer, and the selection of singers was

made competitively -- one a German and the other a non-German. Interpretive difficulties concerning articulation, and hence diction and phrasing, are less, or hardly noticeable in the German-speaking singers. Those performers who are not German, *"experience interpretative difficulties with articulation - the balancing of vowels, the pronunciation of consonants, the manner of phrasing, and the declamation of the text, respectively."*(p.13, abstract) In this part of the work the analysis of the trinity text - vocal - accompaniment is impressive, with important aspects regarding semantics in the works being highlighted. The detailed analysis of performances of the songs mentioned sharpens the focus of the study on the articulation of the text, the problems in the agogics and diction. The elements of language highlighted by PhD candidate Bytyqi mark as particularly important for the performer in the overall construction of each work.

I consider the research to be thorough and extensive, based on a substantial study of a considerable amount of literature, developed in accordance with the statutory requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education and Research. It demonstrates the capacity of Bytyqi-Ismajli to conduct a thorough and rigorous research. The scientific text is based on references to a significant number of authors. I emphasize the relevance of the chosen topic as well as the in-depth knowledge of the research problem supported by personal interpretational experience. I also note the correct use of various sources. I accept the contributions of the dissertation as formulated by doctoral candidate Ardiana Bytyqi - Ismajli.

The two publications presented in support of the theoretical development of the dissertation are quite sufficient. The abstract, which contains 23 pages, correctly presents the main points of the dissertation text.

It is my opinion that Ardiana Bytyqi - Ismajli has successfully fulfilled the aims and objectives that this thesis has set out. At the same time, with the

present research, the PhD candidate provides a perspective for future research on the topic, in different aspects.

I congratulate her supervisor Prof. Dr. Ermila Schweizer for the results achieved.

Having said all this, I would like to propose to the esteemed Scientific Panel to award **Ardiana Bytyqi - Ismajli the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in the specialty 8.3 Music and Dance Art.**

June, 2023 Prof. Dr. Toni Shekerdjieva-Novak Plovdiv