

OPINION

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In respect of a thesis entitled

The Form of Variation in the Contemporary Flute Repertoire

Authored by Birgit Karoh

With scientific supervisors Prof. Yavor Konov, DSc and Prof. Luisa Sello, PhD

For earning a PHILOSOPHY DOCTOR's educational and scientific degree

In Professional Direction 8.3. Music and Dance Art

According to the impressive autobiography provided, the Austrian flautist **Birgit Karoh** has an enviable multidirectional and multilayered experience with the respective qualification of a concert soloist, chamber musician, orchestra player and educator (both in the field of the performing arts and the musical psychology). The list of concerts and teaching and research career taking place in the period of 2019 to 2023, also in relation to and in the context of this thesis, attached to the full text, is indicative and a sufficiently clear evidence of the scale and intensity of the doctoral candidate's performances accomplished at respected forums in a number of countries on three continents (Europe, Asia, North America). Links to many of these performances on YouTube are provided, the high level of her professional performing skills is indisputable and, obviously, her significant experience as an educator and lecturer clearly predetermines the prerequisites for a consistent and thoroughly justified thesis.

The text of the thesis provided is in English, spreads over 174 pages and contains an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The references consist of forty-three literary titles and twenty-six Internet sources in English and German as well as three articles in specialized journals, fourteen pieces of sheet music and one thesis. Two interviews conducted by the doctoral candidate with Rainer Bischof, a contemporary Austrian composer, whose individual creative style is a special topic of the research, have also been published. The abstract consists of 26 pages and truthfully reflects the content and meaning of the thesis. Unfortunately, the Bulgarian translation is not at the required level. It contains a number of inaccuracies and uses controversial terminology in places, therefore, I would recommend its reworking and adequate refinement corresponding to the original text.

The thesis is clearly structured and balanced with an arrangement that definitely helps defend the main point of the research regarding the fundamental importance of the variation as a principle, as a form and as a compositional technique in the flute repertoire. The first chapter is dedicated to the clarification of the variation as a philosophical category originating from the ancient Greek philosophy (the so-called mimesis) as well as its discussion from the different perspectives of the music theory, the musical aesthetics and, to some extent, the history of the instrument. It is stated that the modern musical language (with A. Schoenberg's dodecaphonic system referred to as the most significant manifestation of its) sets new parameters in the interpretation of the variation as a principle and as a form, whereby the further development of the thesis is predetermined. The second chapter is aimed at discussing and analyzing in separate subchapters several significant works from the flute repertoire composed before 1945 and belonging to three main epochal and stylistic trends (the Baroque, the Classical and the Romantic periods). It can be seen that the works are selected purposefully with a view to the different aspects of the manifestation of the principle of variation, which significantly adds to the importance of the research. The third chapter focuses on the contemporary (or *new* as stated

in the corresponding title) flute music with the use of a holistic method of analysis in the respective subchapters of six works well known to the doctoral candidate thanks to her personal interpretive involvement. Here again considerations and observations are resorted to that go beyond the musical and theoretical approach. All available aspects are discussed according to the criterion of variation. The last subchapter (a kind of summary) is focused on the different manifestations of sound development in the context of searching for and finding a new type of expression and/or emotional message, hence the different manifestations of variation at the different *metalevels*.

Considering the scientific contributions of the thesis formulated by the doctoral candidate in six points and, generally, agreeing to their importance, I would point out the following obvious and most essential (in my opinion) contributions:

Based on her significant performing experience and impressive competence in the field of contemporary solo and chamber music intended for flute, the doctoral candidate makes a valuable classification of significant works selected in a historical aspect along the line of variation as a philosophical category, as an essentially activating factor and as a principle of composition. Interesting conclusions are drawn and specific recommendations are given regarding the interpretive approach in the performance of tonal and atonal music – again from the perspective of variation as a common denominator. At the same time, emphasizing the logical continuity in the compositional music making across successive periods and styles, the doctoral candidate proposes to resort to new ways of achieving a truthful and convincing interpretation of new works, including in view of the updated relationship and interaction along the line of a composer – a performer – a recipient, through a broader treatment of the principle of variation in its various aspects, through the use of the holistic analytical approach and through the identification of the sound parameters of the performance process formulated as *metalevels*.

In conclusion, based on my impressions stated above I strongly recommend to the members of the honorable scientific jury that a Philosophy Doctor's educational and scientific degree in Professional Direction 8.3. Music and Dance Art be awarded to Birgit Karoh.

Sofia, 5 December 2024