

NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

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**Vocal formats in Bulgaria: “Music Idol”, “X Factor”
and “Like Two Drops of Water”**

ABSTRACT OF DOCTORAL THESIS

**for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor
in Professional field: 8.3. Music and Dance Art**

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Sofia, 2023

CONTENTS OF THE DISSERTATION	
INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF REALITY VOCAL FORMATS	8
1.1. The nature of reality formats	8
1.2. Prerequisites for the emergence of music reality formats	10
1.3. Vocal music formats around the world	12
1.3.1. “Pop Idol”	12
1.3.2. “The X Factor”	18
1.3.2.1. How the show works	18
1.3.2.2. International versions of “The X-Factor”	20
1.3.3 “The Voice”	24
1.3.4. “Tu cara me suena” / “Like two drops of water”	27
1.4. The emergence of singing formats in Bulgaria	30
CHAPTER TWO. BULGARIAN NEW TALENT TELEVISION SINGING SHOWS	
2.1 “Music Idol” in Bulgaria	41
2.1.1. Characteristics of the form	41
2.1.2. First season of “Music Idol”	43
2.1.3. The second and third seasons of “Music Idol”	48
2.2. “The X Factor” in Bulgaria	53
2.2.1. The nature of the format	53
2.2.2. First season of “X Factor”	55
2.2.3 The second and third seasons of “X-Factor”	59
2.2.4 Fourth and fifth series of “X-Factor”	63
2.3. Winners' realization following the competitions' closure	66
2.3.1. Realization of “Music Idol” winners	66
2.3.2. Winners' post-competition careers	68
CHAPTER THREE. VOCAL WORK WITH THE “MUSIC IDOL” AND “X-FACTOR” CONTESTANTS	73
3.1. The essence of singing and performing	73
3.2. Vocal preparation of the contestants	77
3.3. Outcome of the vocal work with the performers	81
3.3.1. Results of the participants of the second and third seasons of “Music Idol”	82
3.3.2. Results of the participants in the first series of “X-Factor”	87
CHAPTER FOUR. TV VOCAL FORMAT “LIKE TWO DROPS OF WATER”	94
4.1. Nature of the format	94
4.2 The Jury	97
4.3. The participants	100
4.4. Preparation of participants for vocal performances	109
CONCLUSION	120
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS	124
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES	126
APPLICATION 1	136
APPLICATION 2	139

Introduction

After 2000, music reality shows became very popular. They focus on the talent of the contestants and the possibility of a successful professional career. These formats enjoy great popularity and television audiences across a wide age range; they evoke both positive and negative emotions.

According to some viewers, the producers and the jury give the impression that the participants develop a lot and grow professionally during the form. The viewers believe that this is a publicity stunt to attract more contestants and make as much money as possible.

Is this the case? Do the participants think so?

The great interest shown by hundreds of performers and those willing to take part in the music formats shows that they hope they will be successful in their careers. According to the applicants, these formats will help them gain attention, popularity and success. Significantly, almost all participants expressed satisfaction with their work in the formats and said they would be willing to participate again if given the opportunity.

The present study was prompted by the public's extraordinary interest in the emerging TV music shows, by the appearance of numerous opinions and comments about them, both positive and negative: about the vocal qualities of the selected contestants, about the objectivity of the jury and their evaluations, about the fairness of the ranking and the winners.

The choice of the topic was provoked by the relevance of the problem and its practical importance for the discovery of new, unknown singers, talented and capable people of all ages.

This dissertation is the result of my long experience of working with participants in various musical formats, as well as my personal participation in some of them. It explores the nature of television music programmers, their importance in the discovery and development of their participants.

The purpose of this dissertation is to establish the role and significance of musical formats in the discovery, vocal training, promotion, and realization of the performers involved.

In relation to the objective, the following **tasks** are set:

1. To trace the history of televised vocal formats.
2. To study and describe the TV singing shows realized in Bulgaria and their participants - presenters, judges, performers.
3. To trace the effectiveness of vocal training of performers in "Music Idol" and "X-Factor" for optimal development of their vocal skills.
4. To follow the realization of the winners of the Music Idol and X-Factor competitions as vocal performers following their participation in the competitions.
5. To trace the importance of the vocal training of the performers in the "Like Two Drops of Water" form in improving their performance skills and enhancing the quality of their vocal performances.

The present thesis analyses the essence of the musical vocal formats realized in Bulgaria. It follows the vocal work with participants of Music Idol, X-Factor and Like Two Drops of Water. An attempt is made to answer the question to what extent these shows support the professional development of their participants.

The thesis consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices.

The first chapter is devoted to the history of musical vocal forms. 1. Conditions for the emergence of musical singing forms; 2. Musical singing forms around the world - Pop Idol, X-Factor, The Voice, Tu cara me suena (Like two drops of water); 3. The emergence of singing forms in Bulgaria.

Television singing formats aimed at discovering new talent are the subject of the **second chapter**. The nature and characteristics of the Music Idol and X-Factor competitions are examined. The realization of the winners is traced.

The **third chapter** examines the vocal work with the contestants of the Music Idol and X-Factor formats. The nature of the vocal performance and the vocal training of the contestants are described. The results of the vocal training are presented. A comparative analysis of the results of the two formats is made.

Chapter Four presents the essence of Two Drops of Water, the jury, the participants, their vocal training, and the results.

At the end of the thesis there is a bibliography of the literature and internet sources used. From the very beginning of the dissertation, it should be noted that the majority of the sources are internet resources and websites (due to the lack of research and bibliography in the narrow field of the dissertation, especially in Bulgarian). All websites were checked on 18.7.2023 and were then accessible with the necessary information. This clarification is necessary in order to avoid unnecessary repetition in the given resources, which are underlined.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF REALITY VOCAL FORMATS

1.1. The nature of reality formats

Format is a term that is universally used to refer to the work of writers, authors and artists who have an initial idea that they develop to the point of creating what we define as a product that is successfully sold around the world. "The format has two main stages in its development, the draft on paper and the television programme form", according to David Bodicombe¹. The paper format is a detailed written document that presents the original concept of a TV show; it is the recipe that provides the knowledge to reproduce a successful TV performance. "The emergence and development of the reality format marks a new style of television communication that reflects reality in its immediacy and primitiveness, making life more real than it actually is. Reality television is defined as the interpenetration of the private and public spheres"². A relatively new and attractive genre, reality formats have grown rapidly in recent years. To be interesting, these formats require the viewer's active participation.

Each format has its own set of rules that the participants must follow. "It is a show that could be considered a sociological show for the general public"³.

The different sub-genres of reality formats have also developed out of the public's interest in their varied content. Today, talent search formats are absolute hits on TV channels around the world.

¹ Bodicombe, D. J. (2007): *Format Creation*, unter: <http://www.tvformats.com/formats.html>

² Maneva, M. Essence of reality programs. //Contemporary Humanities, 2010, №2, Burgas Free University, p. 68. http://research.bfu.bg:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/74/3/BFU_2010_02_maneva.pdf

³ Bianchi, Laetitia, Meltz, Raphael, „Strep-tease & Big brother – Cameras sans malveillance”, R de reel, volume C, mai - juin 2000, p.4.

Since the year 2000, reality music formats have become increasingly popular. These focus on the talent of the contestants and their chances of success. These formats appeal to a wide age range and television audience. Both in the individual stages and in the finale of the show, producers aiming for high ratings include audience participation, which plays an active role in determining the winners. Many fans express their opinions on social networks, in various forums and on the page of each form. In this way, the producers give "feedback" to the public and find out about their attitudes, opinions and interest in the show. A media presence is guaranteed in the morning blocks of the television station that broadcasts the form on radio, in magazines, etc. All this increases the interest of the audience and ensures the popularity of the participants and thus the greater success of the programme. The success achieved is also guaranteed by preparing the next edition.

1.2. Prerequisites for the emergence of music reality formats

It is the mass media that shape attitudes, behaviours, ideas of what society should be, etc. The focus on people's everyday lives, the desire to show reality as it is, which is characteristic of contemporary mass culture, becomes the basis of various reality television programmes (formats).

The first and often only criterion for evaluating the products of mass culture, including television productions, is high ratings and the possibility of making a profit. Even today, television as a means of communication remains the most popular and accessible medium compared to other means of mass communication. Therefore, it tries not to lose its attractiveness. In this context, the form of television (television programme, television show) has emerged.

1.3. Vocal music formats around the world

1.3.1. "Pop Idol"

One of the most profitable TV formats in the UK is "**Pop Idol**", which makes extensive use of interactivity and viewers who can vote by landline or mobile phone, by text message or on the format's official website. The aim of the show is to find the best new young pop singer or pop idol in the UK based on the votes of the audience.

By 2007, the format had been licensed in more than 35 countries - Germany, Norway, Belgium, Australia, Russia, Croatia, USA, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Canada, etc.

"**American Idol**" is a television format that aired on Fox from 11 June 2002 to 7 April 2016 (15 seasons), and on ABC since 2018.

"**Canadian Idol**" - In 2003, the Canadian television network CTV launched a reality programme to find the most talented young singer in Canada.

In August 2004, "**Idol**" was launched in **Sweden** on TV4 and became one of the most popular shows on Swedish television. It ran from 2004 to 2009 and had 15 seasons. To date, Idol contestants have sold over 1.1 million albums in Sweden alone.

In March 2004, **Indonesian Idol** began airing on RCTI and has become one of the most popular and successful shows in Indonesian television history, as it has in the UK, USA and Sweden.

Versions of "**Idol**" have also been successfully broadcast in South Africa - 15 seasons (2002-2015), India - 11 seasons (2004-2020) and Norway - 10 seasons (2003-2018). Norwegian Idol is unique in that the contestants are allowed to perform songs they have written themselves⁴.

⁴ Throughout the abstract, detailed footnoted information relating to various pop singers, artists, managers, etc. is omitted as links. It can be traced in the thesis. This has been done out of consideration for the need for a summarized (as brief as possible) form of the abstract.

Australian Idol aired on the Ten television network in Australia for 7 seasons between 2003 and 2009.

“**Latin American Idol**” is a Latin American version of the popular British Idol franchise, known for its American version.

Relatively later, in March 2011, the Arabic television show “**Arabic Idol**” was launched. The four seasons of the show are broadcast simultaneously on MBC 1 and LBC.

Following the popularity of the American Idol and Australian Idol formats among New Zealand viewers, Television New Zealand (TVNZ) decided to commission the first season of “**New Zealand Idol**”, also known as NZ Idol, which was launched in 2004 and aired on TV2.

Between 2002 and 2005, 4 seasons of “**Polish Idol**” were broadcast on the Polish television channel Polsat. After a 12-year break, the show returned for its fifth season in 2017.

“**Pakistani Idol**” is the 50th adaptation of the well-known reality form of the British series “**Pop Idol**”. It was developed for the Pakistani entertainment market by GeoTV, which acquired the rights from FreemantleMedia in 2007.

The show was launched in **Portugal** in 2003. It was broadcast for 5 seasons until 2012, but did not attract much interest from viewers. In 2015, it returned to the screen with a 6th season.

The first season in **Brazil** began on 5 April 2006. After season 7 in 2012, the show was cancelled to make way for the Brazilian version of a talent show.

There are many copies of Idol, but none have achieved the success of British Pop Idol.

1.3.2. “The X Factor”

“**The X Factor**” is television's biggest and most successful reality music talent show. It is seen as a new, improved version of “Music Idol”. “The X-Factor” is a British music talent show created by producer Simon Cowell.

1.3.2.1. How the show works

Each season is divided into four parts - auditions, training camp, judges' home visits and live studio performances. The talent is divided into different categories. There are four judges and categories - Boys Under 25, Girls Under 25, Contestants Over 25 and Groups (Boy Groups, Girl Groups, Duets, Trios, and Mixed Vocal Groups).

Since its launch, the show has been a huge success and has become very popular. Versions of the X-Factor show began to appear as franchises **in various countries**.

To date, 15 series of X-Factor have been broadcast in the UK, with the most recent series starting on 1 September 2018 and ending on 2 December 2018.

1.3.2.2 International versions of “The X-Factor”

Since 2004, The X-Factor has been broadcast in 33 countries - Albania - 4 seasons (2012-2015); Arab countries - 1st and 2nd seasons (2006-2007) and 3rd and 4th seasons (2013-2015); Armenia - 5 seasons (2010-2019); Denmark - 12 seasons (2008-2019); Hungary - 9 seasons (2010-2019); Romania - 8 seasons (2011-2018); Italy - 13 seasons (2008-2019); Spain - 4 seasons (2007-2008 and 2018-2019), etc.

On 2 October 2011 the first season of “**X-Factor**” **Kazakhstan** was launched on the first channel “Eurasia”. The prize for the winner is 5 million tenge and a contract with Sony Music Entertainment.

In **Russia**, “X-Factor” was broadcast in 2005-2007 on the TV channel Russia, which, unlike the TV music project Star Factory, does not have high ratings.

The **Ukrainian version** of the British “X-Factor” was launched on 4 September 2010 on the STB channel.

The **Australian version** of “X-Factor” was launched on 6 February 2005 on Network Ten, the same channel as the hugely successful Australian Idol.

To date, 198 winners from around the world have appeared on “The X-Factor”.

1.3.3 “The Voice”

“The Voice” is an international singing reality television format. It is based on the competition 'The Voice of Holland', the original concept of which was created by the Dutch television producer John de Mol. His idea was to audition the contestants in the dark (blind). The aim is for the coaches to focus on singing and vocal qualities. That's why famous performers, top artists from the music industry are invited as coaches.

Unlike “Idol” and “X-Factor”, the show's producers select fewer contestants (100 to 200) who they feel are good enough to go through to the live auditions.

“**The Voice of the Netherlands**” started on 17 September 2010 on RTL 4. By 2019, 9 seasons of the show will have been broadcast in the Netherlands, with a 10th season to follow in 2020.

Between 2011 and 2019, 9 seasons were broadcast in Romania, Ukraine, Germany and Turkey, and 10 seasons in Poland. An 11th season is planned for 2020.

“**The Voice of America**” was launched in 2011, and due to high interest, two seasons per year have been broadcast since 2012. In 2020 there will be 18 seasons.

Since 2011, 8 seasons of the show have been broadcast in Belgium, Finland and Mexico, and since 2012 in Brazil, Australia, France and Russia, with a 9th season due in 2020. Since 2011, 7 seasons of the show have been broadcast in Bulgaria and Portugal and since 2013 in Canada. The 8th season of The Voice of Russia (winner Asker Berbekov) and The Voice of Portugal (winner Rita Sanchez) will end in January 2020.

“The Voice” is also broadcast in Lithuania (2012-2018), Italy (2013-2019), Greece (2014-2019) - 6 seasons each, Israel, Norway (2012-2019) and Ireland (2012-2016) - 5 seasons each, China (2012-2015), Indonesia (2013-2019) - 4 seasons each, Croatia (2015, 2016, 2019) - 3 seasons, etc.

To date, a total of 439 singers from 145 countries have won The Voice, The Voice Kids, The Voice Teens and The Voice Senior.

The show was sold in 2019 and is now owned by ITV Studios.

1.3.4. “Tu cara me suena” / “Like two drops of water”

“Like Two Drops of Water” (translated as "Your Face is Familiar to Me", "You Look Familiar to Me", or more precisely "Your Face Sounds Familiar to Me") is a Spanish television programme created by Gestmusic and broadcast by the Antena 3 channel in 2011. "Your Face Looks Familiar to Me" is a format of international renown. Versions of this programme have been broadcast all over the world.

“Your Face Looks Familiar to Me” is a competition for imitations of musical icons with a comic effect. The format features eight celebrities with their own careers - established actors, comedians, former singers, TV presenters and more.

On 28 September 2011, the first season of formà was launched in Spain on Antenna 3.

Today, there are more than 47 versions of formà around the world. The Romanian version of formà has the most editions (14 in total), with two seasons per year from March 2012 to September 2017, and one edition each in 2018 and 2019⁵.

Immediately after the success of the formà in Spain, other versions were launched:

Venezuela - 4 seasons (2011-2015); Chile, China and the Netherlands - 2012; Italy - 9 seasons (2012 to 2019); Lithuania - 9 seasons (2012-2019); Turkey - 3 seasons (2012-2015); Estonia - 7 seasons (2013-2018); Vietnam - 7 seasons (2013-2020); Ukraine in 2012 and 2013; United Kingdom, USA, France and Peru 1 season each in 2013; Georgia - 3 seasons (2013- 2014); Argentina - 3 seasons (2013-2015); Bulgaria - 8 seasons (2013-2020); Hungary - 6 seasons (2013-2018); Cyprus - 6 seasons (2013-2020); Estonia - 7 seasons (2013-2018); Russia - 4 seasons (2013-2016); Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro - 5 seasons (2013-2019); Poland - 13 seasons (2014-2020); Belarus and Arab World - 2014; Croatia - 6 seasons (2014-2020); Mexico and Germany - 2014; Slovenia - 5 seasons (2014-2019); Costa Rica - 2015; Thailand - 4 seasons (2015-2019); Czech Republic - 6 seasons (2016-2019); Slovakia - 5 seasons (2016-2019), etc.

“Your Face Is Familiar to Me” is a top-selling Spanish formàt, whose versions are still aired in many countries around the world. Interest in the formàt is great and it continues to expand its borders - 2016 in Albania and Slovakia, 2017 in Brazil, 2019 in Angola, Mozambique, etc.

The great interest in world vocal formats in many countries of the world can be seen from the above overview of vocal shows. Their enjoyable and entertaining nature attracts audiences from all over the world, which is why many of these programmes have extremely high ratings. For the participants these formats are an advertisement, an opportunity for expression and hope for future realization, and for their producers an opportunity for the greatest profit. Therefore, their appearance on Bulgarian TV is quite logical. Most of the listed singing formats realized in Bulgaria are made under foreign license, therefore it is necessary to adapt them to Bulgarian conditions.

1.4. The emergence of singing formats in Bulgaria

The first appearance of reality singing formats on Bulgarian television can be considered to be the programme “Vili's Trombone”, created and broadcast on Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) in 1973. The idea came from Katya Vodenicharova, the chief editor of Humour, Satire and Fun. The aim was to audition singers and discover young talent. Comments from the jury of musicians, composers, journalists, writers and actors are included. The chairman is Vili Kazasyan.

Much later, in 2004, the first TV music singing form “**I sing in Ku-Ku Band**” appeared on Bulgarian television and attracted the attention of the audience. The idea came from Slavi Trifonov and was realized by the production company "Seven-Eight" in connection with the search for a singer for the programme "Slavi's Show".

In 2005 there was also a one-off edition of the "Ku-Ku Band Music Academy", produced by Seven-Eight.

In the spring of 2005, the first and only season of the music reality show “Star Academy”, a kind of "Music Idol", was broadcast on Nova TV. “**Star Academy**” is a music format created by the Dutch company Endemol ("Endemol"). The show incorporates many elements of the Big Brother format - the contestants are locked in for three months.

⁵ „Echipa”. Te cunosc de undeva! "Premiată pentru cele zece sezonane de succes ale show-ului, la Antena 1". A1.RO. <https://a1.ro/te-cunosc-de-undeva/stiri/echipa-tecunosc-de-undeva-premiata-pentru-cele-zece-sezoane-de-succes-aleshowului-la-antena-1-id599123.html>.

The first series of **“Music Idol”** was launched in Bulgaria in early 2007 and X-Factor in 2011. Both formats are based on the original concept of the company "Frimental Media".

“The Voice of Bulgaria” is a television music reality show produced in Bulgaria and launched on bTV in 2011. The format was created by John de Mol.

Unfortunately, for the laureates, the contest is not a springboard for the development of their musical careers. Most of them do not have successful musical projects after the show.

In 2013, the formats “Music Academy” and “Like Two Drops of Water” were launched on television.

From 23 September 2013 to 13 December 2013, a new singing format **“Music Academy”** was broadcast on TV7. This format was prepared by the Bulgarian producers TV7 and "Intermediate Station". The production company "Monte Music" and its team are behind the form, taking care of the selection of the songs and the preparation of the participants. The musical producer is Vladimir Ampov-Grafa. The hosts of the show are Ivan Hristov, Andrey Arnaudov and Deo.

The winner of the only season of "Music Academy" is Polly Genova, who now has a successful career.

The Bulgarian version of **“Your face is familiar to me”** ("Tu cara me suena") was launched in Bulgaria in 2013 on Nova TV under the name "Like two drops of water". The programme is produced by Global Films. The form of "Like two drops of water" is discussed in detail in chapter three of this thesis.

In autumn 2016, the reality form "Sing or Lie" was broadcast on Nova TV, which is a Bulgarian version of the show "I can see your voice". The executive producer is Global Vision. The presenters are Maria Ignatova and Nencho Balabanov.

“The Masked Singer” was launched in 2019 and is a Bulgarian version of the show "King of Mask Singer".

Famous Bulgarian personalities perform songs of their own choice for three months. Unique costumes of animals and mythical creatures, created especially for the show, hide the identity of the participants in each of their performances on stage. No one knows the identities of the contestants - not the show's crew, nor the contestants' friends and families.

The foregoing leads to the following conclusions:

The conditions for the emergence of television formats are the rapid development of information and communication technologies, as well as the new meaning that culture acquired at the end of the twentieth century. It is the mass media that shape attitudes, behaviours and ideas about what society should be. The turn to people's everyday lives, the desire to show reality as it is, which is characteristic of contemporary mass culture, has become the basis of various reality television programmes (formats).

Reality formats satisfy people's increased need for entertainment, communication and expression and fit perfectly into the new cultural reality. These formats provide an opportunity for anyone who wants to participate to gain publicity and popularity. Viewers are also actively involved, voting to determine the winners.

The history of TV singers shows their appearance first abroad and later in Bulgaria.

In 2001, one of the most profitable TV formats in the UK, Pop Idol, appeared and established itself as a brand available on the global market. This was followed by X-Factor, The Voice and Like Two Drops of Water. There is a great deal of interest in these formats, both on the part of the producers, who want to maximize their profits, and on the part of the public.

Reality formats are intended for the general public, enjoy great popularity and logically appear in Bulgaria. Most of them are produced under foreign license, so it is necessary to adapt them to Bulgarian conditions.

The opinions of the public and the experts are different and contradictory. Some support them and are positive about them, while others think that it is advertising that only benefits the producers.

What happens to the participants during the formats? Do they develop professionally and are they able to make it when they leave? These questions are answered in chapters two and three of this study.

CHAPTER TWO. BULGARIAN NEW TALENT TELEVISION SINGING SHOWS

2.1 Music Idol in Bulgaria

2.1.1. Characteristics of the form

“**Music Idol**” was the first music reality show on Bulgarian television. The Bulgarian TV music show is based on the original concept of Pop Idol, owned by the British company Frimential Media. The prize in all seasons of the show is a contract with the music company Virginia Records.

The concept of the show is to discover singing talent, with the winner determined by the votes of the public. The aim of the show is to select the best young, unknown pop artist (pop singer or pop songwriter) to become the "Musical Idol" ("Pop Idol") of Bulgaria.

The age limit of the participants in the three seasons of the show realised in Bulgaria is 15 - 29 years. According to the rules the contestants have to be 16 years old, but exceptionally two contestants under 16 years old are allowed. These are Kremena Dimitrova (15 years old), a participant in the first season of the show, and Shanel Erkin (also 15 years old) - in the second season.

So far, three seasons of the show have been completed. The show takes place in four stages: stage one - casting, stage two - theatre auditions, stage three - small concerts and stage four - big concerts.

Candidates for the show are recruited through auditions held in major cities in Bulgaria. 100 participants will be selected for the second round - theatre auditions in Sofia, which will last 3 days and will also take place in three stages:

Stage One - During the day, all candidates are auditioned. 10 performers go on stage and each sings part of a song a cappella. At the end of the day there are 80 contestants left who are divided into groups of 3, boys and girls separately. They are given three songs to choose from and prepare for the next day, dividing the verses and working out the choreography.

Day Two - Participants go out in groups of three and perform the song with piano accompaniment or CD recording. At the end of the day, all approved competitors will be offered 3 songs. They choose one to perform individually with piano accompaniment or CD the following day. Approximately 60 participants remain for the third day.

Third stage - The competitors perform the prepared song before the jury. The jury selects 40 candidates to go through to the next round - the small concerts.

Two rooms are used for *the small concerts* - one is prepared as a concert hall - appropriate decoration, lighting, sound system, podium for the performers, set for the jury and grand piano. The second room is for the waiting performers, the so-called green room, equipped with furniture for the participants and monitors. The *small concerts* are broadcast on weekdays for a week. Each

night 8 contestants perform a song with piano accompaniment. After the song, there is a talk with the jury and the presentation of videos about their preparation. At this stage, the audience vote is taken into account.

At the end of the small recitals, 12 finalists will remain to compete in the large recitals. For 10 consecutive weeks, the contestants prepare and perform a song in a category chosen by the producer. At the *Big Concerts*, the contestants sing with a band. During the performance, voting telephones are graphically displayed. The contestant with the lowest number of votes is eliminated.

Two contestants remain for the Grand Final. The finalists come out three times for two performances each, performing songs in different styles and with different looks. The winner is the one who gets the highest percentage of votes and remains last in the final.

All three seasons are hosted by the duo Ivan Hristov and Andrei Arnaudov, who are joined in the third season by Macedonian Sanja Nikolic, as the season features contestants from Macedonia.

2.1.2. First season of “Music Idol”

The first season of Music Idol in Bulgaria started on BTV in February 2007 and ended in June of the same year. It is considered the most successful season.

The producer is the "Seven-Eight" company.

The vocal consultant of the first season of "Music Idol" was Assoc. Prof. Etien Levy as a vocal pedagogue. As such, he has direct observations on the progress of the form, the development of the contestants' skills and the whole process of building and working on the show.

The winner of the first season of the show was Nevena Tsoneva.

2. 1. 3. The second and third seasons of “Music Idol”

The second season of "Music Idol" in Bulgaria started on BTV on 25.02.2008 and ended on 02.06.2008. The producer of the second and third season is the company "Intermediate Station". The production company was founded in 2000 and is owned by Ivan Hristov and Andrey Arnaudov - the hosts of the show.

The third season of "Music Idol" in Bulgaria started in March on BTV and ended in June 2009. The contestants in this edition are selected in five Bulgarian cities and in the city of Skopje. The aim is to find the best candidates for singing fame in the Republic of Macedonia as well.

Assoc. Prof. Etien Levi is the singing teacher of the reality show in the second and third season. As a direct participant in the realisation of the form, he directly supervises, works and supports the professional realisation of the participants and personally contributes to their development and growth.

“Music Idol” is the first Bulgarian television format for the discovery of new talents, which was realised in three seasons in the period 2007-2009. It has been running with great interest and giving a successful start to previously unknown young performers such as Nevena Tsoneva, Nora Karaivanova, Yassen Zerdev, Toma Zdravkov and others.

2.2. “The X Factor” in Bulgaria

2.2.1. The nature of the format

In 2011, Nova Television began broadcasting the music format “**X-Factor**” (under licence from "Frimental Media"), which has been broadcast in 33 countries since 2004.

The aim of the show is to discover a new, previously unknown musical talent who has all the qualities of a future star - a combination of talent, looks, stage presence, dance skills, etc. The show is open to everyone. The competition is open to all, with a minimum age of 16 and an unlimited maximum age. The producer of the Bulgarian edition is the company "Paprika Latino". Currently there are five editions in Bulgaria - in 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017.

The first stage - *the casting* - is divided into two sub-stages - the preliminary auditions and the public auditions. The contestants will go through pre-judging by the producers before performing in front of the jury. The auditions will take place in 5 major Bulgarian cities - Sofia, Plovdiv, Bourgas, Varna and Veliko Tarnovo, where the participants will sing a cappella, solo or accompanied by a musical instrument. Those who are accepted for the auditions will perform in front of the four mentors and an audience. The "Audition in Front of an Audience" is the first stage to be televised. Each contestant must receive a minimum of 3 "YES" votes from the judges to advance to the training camp.

The second stage is the "*Training Camp*", where the contestants have 3 days to complete a series of vocal tests. This stage is the most difficult for the contestants as it tests their stamina, preparation and discipline. The stage takes place without an audience - only in front of the mentors who decide who will be able to compete in the Six Chair Challenge.

The "*Six Chair Challenge*" is a stage introduced in season 4 of Form Bulgaria. It is the hardest stage of the training camp for both the contestants and the mentors. This is the moment when the mentors understand which category they will be competing against (boys, girls, men and women over 25 and groups). Each participant who continues sings individually in front of the jury. The mentor of each group decides whether to give the contestant a chair. The competitors will be divided into 4 categories: Boys under 25, Girls under 25, Duets and Groups, Competitors over 25.

Only six contestants from each category will advance to the third *Judging School stage*. This is the last stage before the live concerts. At this stage, the role of the judges changes abruptly. The judges become mentors, linked to the category of the performers for whom they are responsible. **The transition from jury to mentor is the most important part of this form. Each contestant sings individually in front of his or her category mentor and a special guest.** Each mentor selects the best of their team for the live performances. This leaves 12 performers for the live concerts - 3 per category. Each mentor is responsible for the training and performance of the performers.

The fourth stage, *Live Concerts*, takes place each week in front of the Show Mentors and an audience. The contestants sing a cappella, alone or with accompaniment. The concerts have a certain theme - Rock, Bulgarian Hits, Love Songs, Halloween, Soul and R&B, Movie Night, Top 20 World Stars, Christmas, etc. Each contestant has to choose a song that fits the theme and that they can perform best. This is the final stage where the TV viewers also vote to decide which contestants should go on. At each concert, the contestant with the lowest number of votes will be eliminated.

2.2.2. First season of "X Factor"

As mentioned above, the first season started on 11 September 2011 on Nova TV. The presenter is Deyan Slavchev-Deo, a popular Bulgarian TV presenter. He has hosted the music show "Jubox", "Commercial Break" and "The Big 10" on BNT 1. He is currently the host of "Sport Toto" on bTV.

In the first season of the show, 200 performers were allowed to audition in front of an audience, 24 of whom were selected during the training camps, leaving 17 participants for the live shows - 3 per category, except for boys, where there were 4 participants.

The contestants are judged by a jury consisting of Vasko Vassilev, Polly Genova, Maria Ilieva and Magomed Aliyev-Maga.

In this article I have taken the liberty of writing a few words about each of the jury members, both X-factor and Music Academy, to highlight their importance and contribution to Bulgarian popular music and culture. To draw attention to the fact that in these otherwise extremely popular and rather "worn out" formats, there are enough successful and established personalities chosen, who have authority and are trusted in the music world. They are also outstanding professionals (as any short biography will tell you), so the benefit to those involved in the forms can be guaranteed. Even a minimal amount of work with any of these names is a guarantee for the growth of young talent.

The "X-Factor" judging panel does not have a chairman, but must have a 3:1 majority to make a decision.

The finalists from the first series of "X-Factor" are:

Alexandra Apostolova from the Magomed Aliyev-Maga's team;

Bogomil Bonev and Raffi Boghossyan from Vasko Vassilev's team.

Alexandra Apostolova came third and Bogomil Bonev second. **The winner of the first season was Raffi Boghossyan.** The prize for the winner is a single recording with the support of Sony Music Entertainment.

2.2.3 The second and third seasons of "X-Factor"

The second series of X-Factor started in September 2013, and the third in 2014.

The presenters of the second, third, fourth and fifth series are Maria Ignatova and Alexandra Raeva.

The jury of the second and third seasons is the same: Maria Ilieva, Lubo Kirov, Satanislava Armutlieva-Sanya and Velizar Sokolov-Zaki.

The winner of the second season is Zhanna Bergendorff, who stands out for her unique style and voice. Atanas Kolev came second and Ana-Maria Yanakieva third.

116 participants were admitted to the second stage of the third season, 27 of them were selected at the training camps and 17 participants remained at the live concerts. There are 5 contestants in the boys category and 4 in the other three categories.

The finalists are Mihaela Marinova (third place) and Nevena Peykova (second place) from the Sanya Armutlieva team and Slavin Slavchev from the Maria Ilieva team.

The winner of the third season is Slavin Slavchev.

2.2.4 Fourth and fifth series of "X-Factor"

The fourth series of the show started on 8 September 2015. The hosts are the same (Maria Ignatova and Alexandra Raeva), but the judges are new: **Lucy Dyakovska, Christian Talev-Krisko, Magardich Halvadhjian and Sanya Armutlieva.**

The finalists are Darina Iotova (third place) from Krisko's team, Kristian Kostov (second place) from Sanya Armutlieva's team and **Christiana Loizu** from Magardich Halvadhjian's team, who was the winner of the fourth edition of "X-Factor". The prize is a single recording and a cash prize of BGN 50 000.

The fifth season of the show started on 10 September 2017. On the panel were **Lyubo Kirov, Krisko, Stanislava Armutlieva and Velizar Sokolov-Zaki**.

A total of 13 contestants will qualify for the "Live Concerts", divided as follows: 4 contestants in the "Girls" category, and 3 contestants in each of the other three categories: "Duets and Groups", "Participants over 25" and "Boys".

The finalists of the fifth season are Eva Parmakova (third place) and Ioana Dimitrova (second place) from the team of Sanya Armutlieva and "4 Magic" from the team of Lyubo Kirov. The winner of the fifth edition of the show is the group "4 Magic" ("For Magic").

The "X-factor" format was broadcast for the first time on Bulgarian airwaves in 2011, and was realized in 5 seasons. The aim of the show is to discover unknown talents who have what it takes to become a future pop and rock star. It is open to anyone over the age of 16. The show is very popular - hundreds of applicants from all over Bulgaria take part in the auditions. The prize for the winner is also attractive - apart from the cash prize, the winner will receive a single recording provided by "Sony Music Entertainment".

2.3. Winners' realization following the competitions' closure

2.3.1. Realization of Music Idol winners

After winning "Music Idol", **Nevena Tsoneva** began a successful career. This is evidenced by her numerous appearances in a number of concerts and competitions at home and abroad (London, Amsterdam, Cyprus, Romania, etc.), as well as the songs and album she has released.

Toma Zdravkov is the winner of the second edition of "Music Idol", who also developed a successful career after the end of the show. His debut album *Hero*, produced by "Virginia Records", was released in 2008.

Participating in Music Idol proved to be a very successful start for the music career of winner **Maggie Dzhanavarova**. She recorded her first single "I Need to Know" immediately after the show in 2009. Her first solo album "First Step" was released at the end of the same year.

From the above, it is clear that the winners of the three seasons of "Music Idol" have gone on to successful careers after the show ended.

Apart from the winners, participation in the show also proved to be a successful start for the musical careers of several other contestants. **Prezlava Peicheva** from the first season continues her career as a singer in the band "They"; **Yassen Zerdev** from the second season is invited to play in the band of "Music Idol 3", also plays in the band of the Ivan and Andrey Show, is a singing teacher of the "X-factor", etc.; **Nora Karaivanova** from the second season, **Dimitar Atanasov** and **Prezlava Mravkova** from the third season, etc. have successful careers.

2.3.2. Winners' post-competition careers

"X-Factor"

The first winner **Raffi Boghossyan** started his musical career with his participation and victory in the first edition of "X-Factor". Two years later, in 2013, he was also the winner of the first series of the 'Like Two Drops of Water' rip-off. In his five-year career as a performer in Bulgaria, Raffi has had 8 hits, 3 of them solo, reaching number one on the Bulgarian pop music charts.

Jana Bergendorff also rose to fame when she won The "X-Factor" and now has a successful career. She has recorded 8 songs, 4 of them in duets with Krisko, Moses, Damian Popov and Plamen Bonev. Together with Raffi, Deo, Leo and Igata and the original artist of the song

David Corey, she participated in the recording of the Bulgarian version of the FIFA World Cup 2014 anthem "The World is Ours".

Slavin Slavchev is the other artist who came to prominence on the Bulgarian music scene through his participation in The X Factor. Right from the start, Slavchev became a crowd favourite in the singing competition. According to the show's producer, Magardich Halvadzian, Slavchev set a record for audience approval - over 70% of viewers who watched the show voted for him. After the end of the show, the winner of the third series of X Factor, Slavin Slavchev, also went on to a successful music career.

Christiana Loizou is one of the most memorable voices from the local "X-Factor". The debut single of "X-Factor" winner Christiana Loizou is "Phoenix" ("Phoenix", 2016), followed by a tour with the concert version of the rock opera "Jesus Christ - Superstar" at the Plovdiv Opera House. In July 2017, Christiana Loizou recorded the song "One in One".

"4 Magic" is a band formed in 2014 as the quartet "Magic". The name **"4 Magic"** was given especially for "X-Factor", they were the first group to reach and win the final of the show. After winning the X-Factor, they recorded five singles on their own.

From what has been said so far, all the winners of X-Factor have gone on to have successful careers after the show. Their successful start earned them a contract with music company Virginia Records, which produced their first independent songs. After the contract ended, the winners went on to have successful careers of their own.

As well as the winners, many of the participants have gone on to successful careers. One example is Michaela Fileva, who took part in the first series of X-factor in 2011 and was eliminated in the second live concert.

The research shows that the winners of both formats are professionally fulfilled. It can be said that X-Factor is more successful than Music Idol in developing the careers of young performers. Their successful start was helped by a contract with Virginia Records, which produced their first independent songs.

CHAPTER THREE. VOCAL WORK WITH THE "MUSIC IDOL" AND "X-FACTOR" CONTESTANTS

3.1. The essence of singing and performing

Vocal performance is one of the forms of musical work. It is a practical, artistic and creative activity in which both professionals and non-professionals participate. Vocal performance activity most often appears as an interpretive performance in which the main actor is the vocal performer. "*Singing* is a pleasure that manifests itself unconsciously and unintentionally from childhood to adulthood. It is a spontaneous expression that is not intrinsically linked to ambition, let alone compulsion."

3.2. Vocal preparation of the contestants

The singers on Music Idol and X-Factor demonstrate their performance skills in front of an audience by performing live. How effective the performance will be depends on *the singer's prior preparation and mental stamina*.

I worked with the singers from the second and third series of Music Idol for three months, for two hours every day of the week. The vocal work consists of the following stages: *singing and working on the song*.

Stage One: Warm-up

This is the preparatory stage before working on the song. During the warming-up the basic habits of singing are learned and the foundations of vocal technique are laid. This initial stage of preparation is very important because it becomes the basis for further vocal work. The following points can be distinguished in the singing process:

- Breathing exercises
- Exercises in articulation
- Work on breathing for singing, correct posture (pose), sound attack and activation of the articulatory apparatus. This includes the alignment of the voice, both in the centre and throughout the range.
- Working on transitions (mastering transitional tones).

The exercises used in singing follow a certain sequence and fulfil certain functions. The most common exercises start in the middle of the range and are performed at a moderate speed, with one syllable on each note. The exercises are chosen to create favourable conditions for the acquisition of singing habits and skills.

In musical formats, singers prepare for concert and television performances. During vocal training, performers develop their vocal skills and abilities and perfect their vocal technique. Mastering vocal technique is a continuous process, but unfortunately time in formats is very limited. Therefore, it is necessary for the teacher to achieve high results in a short time.

In modern vocal pedagogy, the term "vocal technique" refers to the work of all parts of the singer's vocal apparatus and their interaction in the process of singing. The performers involved in the vocal formats are singing 'live' in a television studio in front of an audience. Due to the nature of the musical performance activity, musician-performers are also called artists - artist-vocalist, artist-soloist, etc. On stage, singers are artists who recreate the musical content of the song during the performance. Therefore, along with vocal training, the artistic performance of the song is also worked on according to its artistic and stylistic characteristics.

The teacher must work on the singer's overall development, developing not only his vocal technique but also his artistic and creative skills, i.e. the holistic approach. Nowadays the holistic approach is becoming more and more widespread in the training of singers. "The 'holistic' teacher 'does not teach singing, but creates singers'. The 'holistic' educator does not stop at demanding the complete liberation of the singer's physique and psyche. In forms, the vocal pedagogue works with singers individually, taking into account their abilities, qualities, character, temperament, etc. He or she influences the singers by motivating them to achieve and stimulating their desire to perform on stage.

Stage Two: Working on the song

The repertoire is chosen by the music producer according to the performer's individual style and the theme of the upcoming concert. The themes of the songs to be performed by the participants of the Big Concerts in the second season are: evergreens, pop-folk, MTV hits, film music, duet performance, Latin music, rock music, song performance with big band, Balkan hits, etc. In the third season the repertoire includes Bulgarian songs, disco hits, Balkan pop-folk songs, film music, rock music overtures, Latin music, MTV hits, best of the best and a performance with big band.

The work on the song is divided into the following phases: *introduction to the song, learning the song, artistic interpretation of the song and performance in front of an audience.*

First: Getting to know the song

Since the songs are chosen by the producer, it often happens that the singers perform a song that they do not know. It is therefore important to become familiar with the song by repeatedly

perceiving it - visually, aurally, auditory-visual, motorically. The performer listens attentively and tries to grasp the main musical messages and to create his or her own concept of the interpretation of the song.

Second: *Learning the song*

Learning the song process involves coordinating the auditory representations and how they are expressed by singing. After a number of repetitions, the song is at the stage of being mastered. This is the point at which the song is technically and artistically under control. The songs are learned independently by the performers. During rehearsals, vocal problems are identified, and work is done to correct them - correcting phonetic and vocal errors. The details of the song are worked on - tempo, touches, dynamics, technical difficulties, etc. Mastering vocal technique is not an end, but a means to an artistic performance of the song. For this reason, technical and vocal training are carried out in a complex, inseparable unity.

Today's performers are expected to meet ever higher standards. They must not only be able to interpret masterfully according to stylistic characteristics and their own skills, but also to perform with heart, feeling and artistry.

Third: *artistic interpretation of songs*

Work on the artistic interpretation of a song begins as soon as the song is learned. Artistic performance involves working on the lyrics and melody of the song. Particular attention is paid to articulation and diction, on which the clarity of the text depends. The work on the text is closely linked to the work on the musical phrase. For the artistic construction of the song, it is important for the singer to feel the pulsation of the musical phrase and to be able to phrase it. Expressive performance is in fact a kind of skill in conveying the nuances of mood and emotion. It depends on the singer's style, temperament and interpretative ability. It also depends on the mental attitude and stamina of the singer, who is often anxious and mechanically performs vocal work without emotion. **This stage also includes preparation for public performance.**

Fourth: *Performing the song in front of an audience*

Concert performances require total emotional, intellectual, and physical commitment and involve many stressful situations. All singers experience anxiety and fear and are not always able to control their actions when they are on stage. Stress lowers the quality of the performance, so work is constantly being done to overcome it. Various psychological means are used to create an appropriate mental state that allows a full artistic performance.

The most exciting experiences for the participants are the big concerts, the live performances in front of an audience, which are organized once a week. During the concerts, the singers make direct contact with the audience, demonstrating what they have learned in rehearsals and their performance skills. They re-experience the song, interpreting its feelings and messages according to their individuality and style. These performances are judged by a panel of professional judges and the audience. The performers with the lowest number of votes will be eliminated. As the audience voting is done via SMS, very good performers often end up in the elimination round (where they have to prove their quality at the next *live* show). Sometimes performers who are not so professionally built manage their social media and circle of friends very well and end up ranking higher than they deserve. The performer's performance during the concerts contributes immensely to their popularity with the audience. During the live concerts, the format's score is extremely high.

3.3. Outcome of the vocal work with the performers

3.3.1. Results of the participants of the second and third seasons of "Music Idol"

The vocal development of the singers is determined on the basis of the accumulated artistic-musical experience - the acquired vocal performance skills, knowledge and competences. **The evaluation of the singers' vocal performance skills includes the assessment of vocal technical (vocal technique), artistic and creative (interpretive) skills.**

Vocal technical skills (vocal technique)

When selecting singers, the first impression is usually related to the beauty of the singer's voice. Therefore, when assessing, emphasis is placed on *vocal technique*, which determines the quality of the performance. The qualities of the voice (timbre, range and strength) and the degree of mastery of the singing habits and skills (breathing, diction, sound production) on which good vocal technique depends are assessed. The development of singing habits and skills takes place in the process of mastering vocal technique, as a result of which singers acquire the ability to control their voice as a musical instrument. Good vocal technique also improves the quality of the voice and promotes expressive singing.

Appendix 1 (corresponding tables) shows the results of the participants in the second and third seasons, on the basis of which the following tables No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 have been prepared.

As a result of the vocal work carried out, the performers show better results at the end of the form. Higher scores were achieved by 68% of the singers, which means that they improved their vocal skills and perfected their vocal technique. Some of the performers maintained their initial level (32%); 24% obtained a very good score and 8% a good score (Table 1).

Artistry

At the beginning of the format, singers usually feeling embarrassed and unable to show their true potential. Some of them are singing in front of a live audience in a television studio for the first time and this affects their psyche. Others have higher standards and are afraid of failing. Many of the singers perform the song formally, without any emotion. Gradually, they relax and overcome stage fright. By the end of the format, these performers show a well-defined emotionality and artistry, a more conscious and more appropriate stage behaviour to the nature of the song. For example: two of the participants in Season 2, who were rated average at the beginning, show good results at the end of the form. They were more relaxed and emotionally in control when using different plastic solutions.

The results in terms of the participants' artistry again show a positive change. 64% of the singers scored higher, which means that they have improved their artistic skills. At the end of the format, 36% of the singers maintained their initial level, 8% maintained their good score and 28% had a very good score.

Performing skills

The most important thing for a performer is to have a creative attitude towards the song, to be able to interpret independently and to interpret the messages embedded in the song. Therefore, the ability to be creative in interpreting the musical content of the songs and to have an individual style is assessed.

There was an increase in the number of singers who brought personal creativity and attitude to the song they were performing. 88% of singers improved their interpretation skills. They interpret by empathizing with the ideas and feelings in the song and seeking their own solution. 12% of the singers maintained their initial scores of excellent (4%) and very good (8%). The vocal

work during the show is producing results - the performers have significantly improved their vocal technique, giving them confidence and self-esteem. As a result, they are more relaxed, emotionally responsive and show better artistic skills. Comparing the data in Table 3, the results are very similar. Performers improved their interpretive skills the most (88%), followed by vocal and technical skills (68%) and artistic skills (64%). The scores for vocal performance skills were calculated as an average based on the scores for vocal-technical, artistic and interpretive skills.

Figure 1 shows the scores at the beginning of the Vocal Performance Skills form. It can be seen that of the 25 participants who reached the live concerts, 36% (9) of the singers showed very good vocal performance skills. 56% (14) were rated good and 8% (2) were rated average. The graph shows the preponderance of participants rated very good and good and the absence of participants rated excellent.

At the end of the form (chart 2), the performers showed positive quantitative and qualitative changes. 20% of the singers showed excellent singing skills, 60% very good and 20% good.

Relatively few performers (28%) maintained their initial level - 16% very good and 12% good. The data analysis shows that 72% of the performers improved their vocal performance skills, resulting in improved performance quality. As a result of the vocal work, the singers acquired knowledge, skills and competences and gained valuable artistic and musical experience.

3.3.2. Results of the participants in the first series of “X-Factor”

In the first series of X-Factor, 13 contestants were invited to take part in the live concerts. At the first rehearsal, the X-Factor contestants' vocal performance skills were assessed as in Music Idol - vocal technical, artistic and interpretive skills.

Table 4 in Appendix 1 shows the scores of the contestants in the first series of X-Factor. These scores were used to produce the summary tables below.

Table 4 (Appendix 1) shows **the singers' scores for vocal technique**. The table shows that at the beginning only two singers (15.38%) received an excellent score. At the end of the form it was reported that 84.62% of the performers had improved their vocal technique.

This high result is due to the daily work with the vocal teacher, who constantly monitored, commented, and corrected their mistakes. Intensive rehearsals and concerts also contribute to the improvement of their vocal skills.

In terms of **artistry**, 46.15% of the singers maintained their initial level. The remaining 53.85% of the participants scored higher, which means that they have improved their artistic skills (Table 5).

These results are due to the fact that during vocal training different performance solutions are sought, depending on the nature of the song, individual qualities of the singer, temperament, inspiration, etc. Through active concert activity and improved vocal technique, singers have acquired the necessary self-confidence and therefore show better stage skills. Developing their own style helps singers avoid imitation, which is very common among young pop performers. Therefore, there is a constant effort to preserve the singer's individuality by giving them the freedom to create their own interpretation.

The “X-Factor” contestants received very good (84.32%) and excellent (7.69%) ratings for their interpretation skills right from the start (92.31% overall). Despite these good initial scores, 53.85% of the singers improved by the end of the season. 46.15% of the participants maintained their initial scores of very good and excellent (Table 6).

At the beginning of the form, the participants' singing skills were rated as good (23.08%) and very good (69.23%). Only one of the singers showed excellent skills.

At the end of the format (Chart 4) the participants were rated higher, indicating that they had developed their vocal skills and abilities as a result of the vocal work undertaken. Graphs 5 and 6 show the summary data of the participants' vocal development in the two forms. Despite the high baseline data of the X-Factor participants, the results show that the performers in both forms developed their vocal skills. The graph shows that X-Factor contestants had the greatest development of technical vocal skills (84.62%) and Music Idol contestants had the greatest development of interpretive skills (88%).

In terms of vocal performance skills, it can be concluded that there was significant development in both forms. Musical Aid singers showed an increase of 72% and “X-Factor” singers 69.23% (Figure 6).

These high results indicate that over 60% of the singers developed their vocal skills during their participation in the formats. By improving their vocal technique, they improved the quality of their performances. The stage performances have helped them to loosen up their demeanor and unleash their artistic abilities. As a result, they respond to the emotional and imaginative content of the song, bringing their thoughts, individual creative experiences, views and understanding to the performance. The vocal skills and stage experience they have gained have given them the confidence and self-esteem so necessary for any young performer.

I think that the results of the contestants are relative because everyone showed a different attitude in the different rounds. There are performers who were eliminated at an early stage (Mihaela Fileva, who came second) but then, thanks to their qualities and professional discipline, became one of the most popular stars of the young generation. Here we have to take into account the vote of the public, which in many cases differs from that of the professional mentors. Therefore, the elimination of this type of performer can be seen as a phenomenon, as can the entry into the final, thanks to the public vote, of performers who have not shown any more than those who have been eliminated. Many of the performers from the first format went on to become extremely popular - Raffi Boghossyan, Michaela Fileva, Angel and Moses, the groups - Voice of Boys and Suga'Mamma. Many of these artists continue their performing careers with great success. All this is due to this exceptional form, which gives young performers a chance and where they grow to the maximum in such a short time.

The job of a singing teacher is not only to teach breathing exercises, articulation exercises, vocal exercises, and performance on the song (the piece in question). A very important part of the teacher's personality is to instill confidence and the self-esteem needed for the stage. A good teacher feels the character of each performer, whatever their specialty (singer, artist, etc.) and completes their personality and presence on stage. In this way, everyone grows and the meaning of each format is filled not only with show but also with content.

CHAPTER FOUR. TV VOCAL FORMAT “LIKE TWO DROPS OF WATER”

4.1. Nature of the format

In 2013, the musical format “**Like Two Drops of Water**”, which is the Bulgarian version of the show "Tu cara me suena" created in Spain, was broadcast on Nova TV. The show is produced by the company Global Films. The show features eight celebrities (actors, singers, TV presenters, athletes) who imitate world famous and Bulgarian singers for three months. All this is done with "live" singing.

The participant work with a singing teacher, choreographer and theatre director who help them with the specific imitation - how to copy exactly the way of singing, movements, gestures and choreography in the video of each performer. A top-notch team of stylists, make-up artists and hairdressers work together to make the contestants look exactly like the original performers.

Each show includes a video showing the stars rehearsing and the process of their amazing transformation. At the end of each show, the contestants find out who they will be transforming into the following week. Pictures of various famous singers are shown on a giant screen and the choice is made at random by pressing a button.

The eight contestants compete on stage each week. They are judged by a professional panel of judges, usually consisting of three people.

After the contestants have performed, there is a special guest (a celebrity) who takes on the role of the performer during the concert. The task is for the audience to try and guess who the performer is. The name of the celebrity is guessed at the end of the performance. From the third series, the special guest is introduced at the beginning of the show and becomes the fourth member of the judging panel for one night. From the fourth series of the show, the special guest is introduced after the contestants' performances and before the judges' scores.

Each show is self-contained and has its own winner, who receives the prize money to donate to a charity of their choice. The final show of the season decides who will receive the grand prize (a new car) and be declared the winner.

By 2020, there were eight editions of the show in Bulgaria, which is the subject of this study:

- The first season started on 13 March 2013
- The second season - 10 March 2014
- The third season - on 3 March 2015
- The fourth season - 3 March 2016

A peculiarity of the fourth season is that for the first time the participation of a duet was allowed - Georgi Nizamov (actor) and Svetozar Hristov (pop singer).

- The fifth season of the show started on 27 February 2017.
- Sixth season - 26 February 2018
- The seventh season - 25 February 2019
- Eighth season - 24 February 2020

A feature of the eighth series was the selection of two of the contestants by audience vote, and for the first time there were 9 contestants.

The presenters of all 8 seasons are Dimitar Rachkov and Vasil Vasilev-Zueka.

4.2 The Jury

The jury of "Like Two Drops of Water" consists of prominent Bulgarian singers, musicians, artists, directors, and producers, renowned in their fields: **Magardich Halvadzian, Hilda Kazasyan, Dimitar Kovachev-Funky, Lyuben Dilov Jr, Militsa Gladnishka, Yulian Konstantinov, Dobrin Vekilov-Doni, Yordanka Hristova, Viktor Kalev, Yulian Vergov**

4.3. The participants

As already mentioned, eight celebrities (actors, singers, TV presenters) take part in the show and have 3 months to imitate world famous and local artists from the music scene. The contestants must imitate the original singer as closely as possible, both vocally and in every single element of his or her performance (from the video or concert) - vision, stage manner, movements,

voice timbre, etc. To do this, the contestants have to undergo all sorts of changes in order to be "like two drops of water" with the original.

Eight participants, seven actors and one singer, took part in the *first season* of the show. Season one participants were: **Albena Mihova, Alexey Kozhuharov, Stanimir Gumov, Militza Gladnishka, Stefan Ryadkov, Diana Lyubenova, Maria Ignatova and Raffi Boghossyan**, a pop singer. All the other contestants were actors, with Militza Gladnishka also performing as a jazz singer. The contestants with the most points competed in the final. **The winner of the first season of Like Two Drops of Water was Raffi Boghossyan.**

The participants of the second season were actors **Nevena Bozukova-Neve, Deyan Donkov, Maya Bezhanska, Stefania Koleva, Antoaneta Dobрева-Neti**, TV presenters **Pavel Vladimirov, Kutsi Vaptsarov** and singer and TV presenter **Ivo Tanev**. Once again, the actors dominated, with seven of them. Bulgarian actress **Nevena Bozukova-Neve**, popular for her participation in the show "Alaminut" on bTV and the series "Floor Property" on Nova TV, was the **winner of the second season.**

The cast of the *third season* included 4 singers, 4 actors and 1 presenter. They were: pop-folk singer **Azis**, rap singer **Crisco, Jana Bergendorf** (pop singer and winner of "X-Factor 2"), **Deliana Marinova-Juji** - co-presenter and actors **Philip Avramov, Milena Markova-Matsa, Nona Yotova and Nencho Balabanov**. The number of singers in this season had significantly increased compared to the previous two, especially if we include the actors **Nona Yotova and Nencho Balabanov**, who are also pop singers. The winner of the third season was **Nencho Balabanov**, the contestant with the most weekly wins.

The participants of the *fourth season* were the actors **Gerasim Georgiev-Gero, Julia Bocheva, Kalin Vrachanski, Georgi Nizamov - Zhoro** and the singers **Svetozar Hristov, Orlin Pavlov, Polly Genova, Petya Ivanova-Preslava and Preya Osasei**. For the first time this season the duet of the actor **Georgi Nizamov** and the pop singer **Svetozar Hristov** took part, and the number of singers (5) was larger than the number of artists (4). Kalin Vrachanski, the artist with the most victories in the weekly concerts, was the winner of this season.

The contestants of the fifth season were actors Bashar Rahal, Sofia Dzhamdzhieva, musician Kostadin Georgiev-Kalki, footballer Vanya Yafferovich, pop-folk singer Desislava Doneva, known as Desi Slava, and pop singers Lyudmila Dyakovska-Lyusi, Miroslav Kostadinov-Miro and Michaela Marinova (contestant of the third season of X-Factor and winner of The Masked Singer). Winning the fifth series of "Like Two Drops of Water" was Michaela Marinova.

The participants of the sixth season were: two actors Borislav Zahariev and Ivan Yurukov, one model - Zlatka Raykova and five singers - Margarita Khranova (pop singer), Geri-Nikol Georgieva (R&B and pop singer) Slavin Slavchev (pop rock singer), Konstantin Slavchev-Kotseto and Sophie Marinova (pop folk singers). The winner of the sixth season of the show is Slavin Slavchev (winner of the third season of "X-Factor").

In the *seventh season* of "Like Two Drops of Water" all participants were singers. Stefan Ilchev was the winner of the seventh season of the show.

The eighth season of the show "Like Two Drops of Water" took place in the unusual circumstances related to the state of emergency declared in the country in connection with the spread of the coronavirus "Covid-19". A precedent in the history of the show was set by the anti-epidemic measures introduced, which left the eighth season of the show without an audience in the studio. However, the show ran with exceptional interest, being preferred by 52% of the active age audience (18-49 years), which is nearly 4 times higher than the viewership of the second TV show in the same time slot. "Like Two Drops of Water" tops the ranking for the most preferred

programme among active age viewers. The average audience share of all thirteen episodes of the eighth edition among active age viewers was 45.6%. The GARB Audience Intercept Bulgaria data also shows that shows in season eight averaged over 2.4 times the audience share of bTV at the same time among active age viewers.

Participants in the eighth season of the show included actors Dimitar Marinov and Antoan Petrov-Andi, singers Maggi Dzhavarova, Galya Kurdova, Darina Yotova-Dara, Iotislav Yotov-Toto, Georgi Simeonov-JJ, Luna Yordanova and Fikret Tuncer, better known as Fiki Storaro.

For the first time in the show's history, a contestant conceded their place in the final to the next in the rankings. Dimitar Marinov gave his position in the final four to Maggie Dzhavarova (85 points), who came in second. Third place went to Dara and fourth to Georgi Simeonov-JJ. Fiki Storaro won and became the winner of the eighth season of the music show "Like Two Drops of Water". Fiki Storaro is a Bulgarian pop-folk singer.

In the most decisive last minutes, nearly 60% of the audience watched the long-awaited announcement of the annual winner. It was the highest-scoring finale since the show's launch eight years ago. It reached over 2.5 million viewers.

According to Google Analytics data, more than 2.4 million video views were made across Nova Broadcasting Group's online platforms during the show's eighth season alone⁶. The show's eighth season is the clear leader in TV airtime.

On 21.02.2021, *the ninth season* of the show "Like Two Drops of Water - All Stars" was launched, as its participants have already competed on the show. The hosts are Vasil Vassilev-Zueka and Gerasim Georgiev-Gero. The jury was composed of.

Azis (participant in season 3), Katsi Vapsarov (participant in season 2), Militsa Gladnisha (participant in season 1), Michaela Marinova (participant and winner in season 5), Polly Genova (participant in season 4), Raffi Boghossyan (participant and winner in season 1), Sophie Marinova (participant in season 6) and Fiki (participant and winner in season 8). The season ends on 24.05.21, and **the winner is Raffi Boghossyan, who won the show for the second time.**

From the above it is clear that in the eight editions of "Like Two Drops of Water" a total of 66 performers participated. Of them 34 singers, 26 actors, 3 presenters, 1 writer, 1 football player and 1 model.

It is noticeable that in the first seasons most of the participants were actors. For example, in the first and second season there is 1 singer and in the third season there are 3 singers. In the fourth, fifth and sixth seasons there are 5 singers and in the seventh and eighth seasons there are 7 singers. Five seasons of the show have been won by singers - seasons one, five, six, seven and eight. Three seasons (second third and fourth) have been won by actors.

During the participation in the show, the participants impersonate world-famous and Bulgarian performers. They perform songs in different styles and genres - pop, rock, pop folk, classical, folk, etc. To cope with the tasks, the performers work with a team of specialists who prepare them for the weekly concerts.

What difficulties do participants encounter during preparation? Who handles the imitation better - the actors or the singers? The questions are answered in this presentation.

4.4. Preparation of participants for vocal performances

The preparation of the participants is in the hands of a singing teacher, drama teacher, choreographer, stylist, make-up artist, etc.

⁶ Karakoleva, D. Grand finale of the most watched show on NOVA.

Vocal work is carried out with the singers twice a week for 2 hours. On request, additional lessons can be arranged at the participants' convenience, whether on a holiday or during the week. During the vocal training, work is done to improve singing habits and skills and to master the repertoire.

The stages of vocal work are the same as in other forms, but here the emphasis is on imitation. Unlike other shows, where the singers have to have their own style, be good performers and interpreters, in this show the participants have to be able to imitate well-known Bulgarian and foreign singers, performing songs in different styles. Who they will imitate depends on the Lucky Button.

The vocal coach's job is not only to train the contestants to sing, but also to imitate the singers without damaging their own voices, i.e. without straining their voices and singing out of their range. This makes the vocal coach's job extremely difficult and responsible. Not only does he have to prepare the students well, but he also has to protect their voices. The task is difficult because very often men have to take on a female role or women have to imitate male voices. The difficulty of these limitations also stems from the fact that many of the participants lack the necessary vocal technique and are unable to control their voices. For the artists participating in the form, there is no problem in imitating the singer's behaviour, but they have difficulties with the vocal performances. Singers who have their own career have difficulty imitating other singers (their timbre, their way of singing) because they have their own style.

As mentioned above, a total of 66 artists - singers, actors, presenters, writers, etc. - have taken part in the eight editions of Like Two Drops of Water. To follow the development of the participants and compare the results, three groups were distinguished: a group of singers, a group of actors and a group of participants with other professions - famous journalists, sportsmen, etc. In order to be able to follow the development of the participants, an assessment of their skills is made at the beginning and at the end of the format. As the show is about imitation, not only their singing and artistic skills are assessed, but also their imitation skills. Competitors are graded as excellent, very good, good and average. In the preliminary round, contestants who do not have the necessary qualities and who are rated poorly are not accepted.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix 2 show the data on the singing abilities of the participants in the preliminary round.

Table 1 shows that singers entered the format with very good and excellent vocal training. Only one of them received an average score. At the beginning of the format, some of the singers felt a great deal of tension because they did not feel sufficiently prepared for the upcoming performances. Although they have experience and careers of their own, this is a new challenge with many unknowns.

Constant rehearsals and concert performances are bearing fruit. Rehearsals under the guidance of a teacher are extremely important not only for preparation but also for the development of the performers.

Despite the high starting level, at the end of the format 55.88% of the singers improved their singing skills and obtained higher scores, which means that they went to the next level: 2.94% from average to good and 52.94% from very good to the next higher level.

Table 2 in Appendix 2 shows the data of the actors. It can be seen that participants with good (30.77%) and very good (61.54%) singing skills predominate at the beginning. Among the actors there are participants who do not have the necessary vocal training and this is reflected in their performance at the beginning of the format.

At the end of the show, positive changes were reported, with 57.69% of the participants scoring higher and 42.31% maintaining their initial level.

Table 3 in Appendix 2 shows the results of participants with other occupations and shows that they started with the lowest scores compared to others. This is because they are neither professional singers nor actors. At the end of the show, only one of the participants seemed to have improved his singing skills.

However, there were positive changes in all groups of participants, with actors improving their singing skills the most (57.69%), followed by singers (55.88%) and finally participants with other professions (16.67%).

Tables 4, 5 and 6 in Appendix 2 present the results for the artistic skills of the three groups of format participants, at the beginning and at the end. The tables show that actors had the highest scores, followed by singers, and participants in other occupations had the lowest scores.

In terms of artistic skills, 35.29% of the singers improved their skills. Singers with very good scores (67.65%) predominated at the beginning and excellent scores (50%) at the end (Table 5, Appendix 2).

For the actors it is also noticeable that, despite the high initial scores, there was a positive change. 34.62% received higher scores at the end of the format, thanks to the good vocal training that helped them to overcome embarrassment, relax and perform better.

Table 6 shows that the group members of the other participants started the format with significantly lower scores. At the beginning 88.33% showed good artistic skills and at the end the same percentage of participants were rated as very good. 66.67% showed better skills than at the beginning of the format.

The analysis carried out shows that all participants improved their artistic skills, with the greatest change in the group of participants with other occupations.

Tables 7, 8 and 9 in Appendix 2 present the data on the participants' imitation skills.

During the rehearsals with the singers, it was found that performers who had their own style found it particularly difficult to get into the image of another singer. No matter how good the performers are and how many years of experience they have, they are definitely embarrassed. They find it particularly difficult to imitate the timbre (especially if the singer is of the opposite sex) and the style of singing. This affects their confidence, their psyche and their performance. It has been found that young singers at the beginning of their career who do not have an established style of their own fare better.

Table 7 in Appendix 2 shows that at the end of the format 14 of the singers (41.18%) showed better imitation skills.

The fact that they had to sing in public performances proved to be a serious challenge for some of the actors. Despite the fact that they were selected as actors who were good enough in their profession, they were also anxious and showed lower scores at the beginning. At the beginning of the show (Table 8, Appendix 2), one of the actors was rated average, not because he was weak as an actor, but because he did not have enough vocal training, which affected his performance. At the end of the format, the same actor receives a very good mark for his imitations. This means that, as a result of his improved vocal habits and skills, he has gained confidence and the opportunity to develop his talent. At the end of the format, 38.46% of the actors showed a positive change (Table 8, Appendix 2).

The highest percentage of the group of participants with other professions improved their mimicry skills, 83.33% (table 9, appendix 2). This result is also logical, as these participants are

neither singers nor actors and start with the lowest scores. During their participation, most of them significantly improved their imitation skills.

Figures 8, 9 and 10 show the summarized results of all participants in the format, where the dynamics of their development can be clearly seen.

In Figure 8 and Table 10 in Appendix 2 it can be seen that the participants with very good singing skills at the beginning and with excellent scores at the end predominate. At the end of the format it is reported that 53.03% have improved and perfected their singing skills. The improved singing habits and skills have given the participants the confidence and self-esteem so necessary for vocal performance. Good vocal training gives them freedom and influences their artistic performances.

Table 11 in Appendix 2 and Figure 9 show that there was a preponderance of participants rated as having very good artistic skills at the beginning and excellent skills at the end. It is reported that 25 (37.88%) of the participants improved their artistic skills.

The results summarized in Figure 10 show the development of imitative skills. It seems that at the end of the format 45.45% of the participants had better imitation skills (table 12, appendix 2), i.e. they were more successful in embodying the image of a singer.

The summary data showed that 35 of all participants (53.03%) improved their singing skills, 25 participants (37.88%) improved their artistic skills and 30 participants (45.45%) improved their imitation skills. These results were relatively lower than those of the participants in the other formats. This is because 'Like Two Drops of Water' involves well-known and experienced performers, whereas 'Music Idol' and 'X-Factor' involve young, new and unknown performers.

The results presented above eloquently show that while participating in Like Two Drops of Water, most of the contestants improved their singing, artistic and imitation skills within 3 months.

Who is better at imitation - the actors or the singers? It's hard to say, because there are winners among both the singers and the actors. It all depends on the qualities of the contestants. Judging by the number of winners in the nine seasons (6 singers and 3 actors), the singers are better. This is because to be a good singer you also have to be a good actor, you have to have an air and you have to be able to command the audience. The contestant who does well is the one who imitates the original singer as best as possible, both vocally and in every single element of his/her performance (from the video or the concert) - vision, stage manner, movements, timbre, etc. Although the judges often say that the singing doesn't matter, the winners are the ones who can inhabit the singer's image, empathizing with the feelings put into the song through their performance and artistic techniques.

Imitation is most difficult for professional singers who have their own style and find it difficult to imitate other singers. No matter how artistic they are, they find it difficult to get into the image of another singer and imitate his or her timbre, behaviour and way of singing. Acting is not a problem for actors, but imitating the singer's voice is also quite a difficult task, especially for those who do not have the necessary singing technique and do not know how to control their voice.

The best testimonial for a teacher is the result of his work - the performer's performance in live concerts. During the concert performances, the performer embodies the image of the singer and tries to present him/her in the best possible way (behaviour, appearance, singing, mood).

From the data presented for this television format, the following conclusions can be drawn.
 – “Like two drops of water” is one of the most popular TV shows with already 11 editions in Bulgaria (until 2023).

– I think that it is the most attractive and serious (in terms of artistic and vocal work), but also an entertaining reality show. Irrespective of the hosts' sketches, the constant bickering or the jury's games, the challenges the contestants face are often extremely difficult to achieve. The tireless work of the teaching team and the cast is evident. The audience witnesses the growth of the performers. This is what keeps the audience interested and makes them feel part of the reality television experience.

– The exceptional professionalism of the vocal, movement and artistic coaches, the incredible technical team, the sheer scope of the direction and production of the show achieve continuous improvement. The sense of surprise, the demand for challenge that is achieved during the live shows keeps the audience in constant contact with the performers and educators.

– What the show has shown in its 11 seasons gives reason to expect even higher results - both from the performers and from the producers' ingenuity in challenging the audience's surprises and expectations.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, reality formats have gained immense popularity as a relatively new form of television programming. They are the result of the rapid development of mass media, the changing attitudes and needs of people, and the forms and means of communication. The most mainstream, popular and accessible medium is television, which is trying to attract more and more viewers with productions that offer high ratings and profit opportunities.

An overview of TV song formats shows that they first appeared abroad and later in Bulgaria. Most of the singing formats are produced under foreign license, so it is necessary to adapt them to Bulgarian conditions. A characteristic feature of these shows is that there is a direct connection with the viewers, who evaluate the performers according to their own criteria, as there are no precisely defined ones. The audience plays an active role and participates in the selection of the winners by voting.

A large part of the audience believes that the jury and the producers impose their opinion that the contestants develop a lot and grow professionally during their participation in the show. In their opinion, this is advertising to attract more participants.

During the competition, all the television media take care of the contestants. They give interviews to TV channels, newspapers, magazines, take part in a number of concerts, etc. The aim of this publicity is for the producers to make as much profit as possible. However, it is not clear to what extent this helps the performers. Often, the winners leave the stage immediately after the show and give up their dream of a career because there are no producers willing to invest in them.

This study is aimed at all viewers looking for answers to these questions:

- Is it worthwhile to participate in these formats?
- Do they help participants to develop professionally and fulfil themselves?
- Is it PR or reality?

The research aims to establish the role and importance of musical forms in the discovery, promotion and realization of the performers involved.

The results presented support the claim that participation in singing reality formats does not only serve the purpose of advertising and promoting the participants, but also contributes to the development and improvement of their singing, artistic and creative skills. As far as their realization is concerned - for some it turns out to be successful, for others it ends after the end of the show. **A successful career depends to a large extent on the performers themselves, and if**

they do not show the necessary activity and continue to work and improve, the benefits of the brief minutes of public fame will remain useless.

All of the above justifies the following **CONCLUSIONS**:

1. The results of this study, which was the first of its kind in Bulgaria, show that vocal training helps the participants to develop their vocal skills.
2. Thanks to the good preparation they are more relaxed, more artistic, have the necessary self-confidence, which is reflected in the quality of the performance. The vocal skills and stage experience they gain give them the confidence and self-esteem necessary for any young performer.
3. The majority of participants in both competitions go on to achieve success, with X-Factor proving to be more successful in developing the careers of the young performers. A successful start led to a production contract with the music company Virginia Records, which produced their first solo performances.
4. A study was carried out to follow the vocal development of the artists and was published as "Like Two Drops of Water". It also shows that over the course of the show, the participants honed their performance skills, which improved the quality of their vocal renditions. The performers have taken on the role of singers, using all their vocal and creative potential to build up the image of the singer to the best of their ability.
5. Although the aim of the "Like Two Drops of Water" format is not to discover young or unknown talents, it does give performers who have only recently become famous through their participation in other reality programmes a chance to become even more popular - Mikhaela Marinova, Raff Boghossyan and Slavin Slavchev.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it was a real challenge for me to write this dissertation and answer all the questions posed above. For 15 years I have been collecting data about the participants and trying to evaluate them in an impartial way, in real conditions - during rehearsals and concerts. The evaluation of the participants is based on their performance in the form and has no relation to their professional qualities outside the format.

I put all my energy, personal experience, and love for the art of singing into this. I have followed and enjoyed the success of the many artists who have taken part in the formats, their every performance and every completed project. Those who, regardless of the result (winner or not), have made it through the busy, intense weeks of work - vocal, artistic, movement - have proven themselves and are ready for active and successful further stage realization.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS

1. A historical overview of the existing singing formats is given according to the chronological order in which they appeared. The conditions for their emergence are analysed. The formats "Music Idol", "X-Factor", "The Voice" and "Like Two Drops of Water" in Bulgaria are described in detail. The editions of the formats are systematized according to the number of seasons in different countries. The emergence of TV singing formats in Bulgaria is discussed. They are described in detail according to the order of their appearance.
2. The first study in Bulgaria on the effectiveness of singing training during the participation of singers in the TV shows "Music Idol" and "X-Factor" is carried out.

3. The step-by-step vocal work with the participants is described and the results are derived, confirming the effectiveness of their vocal training. The participants successfully apply the acquired knowledge, skills, and competences in their musical practice in their performances.
4. The realization of the winners of "Music Idol" and "X-Factor" after their participation in the formats will be traced, proving the role of the show in their subsequent successful careers.
5. The results of the vocal work carried out with the participants of Like Two Drops of Water prove its importance in improving their skills and raising the quality of their vocal performances.
6. All in all, the dissertation is a kaleidoscope of the most active and attractive artists - singers and non-singers - on the Bulgarian stage in the last 20-30 years, showing the face of popular culture in the country. This collected material (with rich internet sources and siteography) can be a starting point for further research.