

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Sc. Elisaveta Valchinova-Chendova (NBU)

Prof. direction 8.3. Music and Dance

for the dissertation of

METE GÖKÇE

on the topic

YOUTH CHOIRS IN TURKEY IN THE LATE 20th CENTURY AND EARLY 21st CENTURY – PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in

professional direction 8.3. Music and Dance

Research supervisor: Prof. Yavor Konov, Dr. Sc.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE PHD CANDIDATE

Mete Gökçe is a distinguished choral conductor with extensive experience, music manager and pedagogue. He was born on June 1, 1975 in Ankara (Turkey). Mete Gökçe is a graduate of Çanakkale University majoring in Pedagogy and Çukurova University majoring in Choral Conducting. He enrolled in the PhD in

Music program of New Bulgarian University in 2014. Currently he is lecturing at the “March 18 University” in Çanakkale.

Mete Gökçe is known to Bulgarian musicians mostly as the main organizer of the Festival of Choral Art in the town of Çanakkale and as a very good choral conductor¹.

EVALUATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is related to the active and diverse artistic activity of Mete Gökçe. It is dedicated to an important phenomenon in music culture – choral singing, naturally defined as the most democratic genre, involving a large number of performers from early age to adulthood and the widest audience. By focusing on the youth choirs, which were the first ones to perform polyphonic choral singing in Turkey, the text discusses the historical processes and variations of Western music style.

As emphasized in the dissertation, “The research is especially important for the presentation of the systematic formation of youth choirs in Turkey, the spread of youth choirs in choral structures in general, their educational models and roles in formal education, the diversity of choral performance, and part of what structure they are. For this reason, the research is important for revealing the general situation of youth choirs and illuminating perspectives for them, as

¹ For example: the radio show "The Children's Choir of the National Radio of Bulgaria conquered the Turkish audience" (BNR, published on July 23, 2013) – about the participation of the Children's Choir of Bulgarian National Radio, conducted by Acad. Hristo Nedyalkov, at the Festival in Çanakkale; The review of the festival by Prof. Yavor Konov (*Music Horizons* magazine, 2015, № 8) – the initiator, main organizer and indeed the "soul" of the festival is the Turkish chorus master Mete Gökçe (Mete Gökçe, 40 years old, born in Ankara, living in Çanakkale), who performed at this festival with 3 choirs led by him: "Konrul Vocal Ensemble", "Çanakkale Barış Korosu" and "100 Ses Gençlik Korosu". Conductor not only with a mature and clear manual technique, but also artistic and charming, with suggestion and stage presence, with moments of "chic" in communication with choirs and the audience ... Lecturer at the University "March 18" in Çanakkale. The magnificent conductor Mete Gökçe enjoyed genuine love and warm welcome from students, choristers (own and foreign), and the audience ... ", the Bulgarian" Sofia Boys Choir " with conductor Adriana Blagoeva also participated in this festival.

well as for creating a comprehensive bibliography of Turkish choral music, for the benefit of its researchers.” (Abstract, Introduction, p. 8).

The assigned tasks and objectives determine the structure of the work.

The content is organised as introduction, five main chapters with subchapters, a conclusion with indicated contributions and appendices, as well as a presentation of the author’s artistic activity – a total of 167 pages.

The text is clear and structured in great detail. It is based on the historical approach of problematizing the facts; the processes are derived and argued clearly, with an appropriate literary support (the first three chapters). The current situation of choral work is regarded from various viewpoints of the problems that youth choirs are facing (Chapter Four) – socio-cultural, pedagogical, psychological, and behavioural ones. The dissertator is an active participant in the above mentioned situation, being an established pedagogue, conductor and public figure. The analysis of the activity of the National Vocal Choir School “100 Voices” created by him is a possible model for effective solution of problems and a perspective for the development of youth choral music in the country, which is undoubtedly a personal contribution with proven impact.

The bibliography includes works by 35 authors in Turkish and English.

The **first chapter**, entitled "**Assessment of the History of Choir Research in Turkey from 1970 to the Beginning of the 21st Century**", is interesting with its detailed tracing of the history and prehistory of contemporary Turkish choral music and Turkish music in general (traditional Turkish court music, traditional Turkish folklore music, collective monodic singing in traditional culture and religious practice, subjective and objective preconditions for the creation of choirs in Turkey and its connection with janissary (Mehterhane) music, the influence of Western music traditions on Ottoman music

and the changes that led to modern choral work in Turkey in means of performance and creativity.²

The **second chapter** – "**Types of choral singing in Turkey in the 20th century**" presents in detail (firstly) the place and role of music and choral education in school curricula, school choirs, the issues of staff and training of their leaders, as well as various organizational structures with choral associations, concerts and festivals, as well as with the training – from early school age to master classes in choral conducting, and (secondly) – the names and work of 13 leading contemporary Turkish choral conductors.

The **third chapter** is entitled "**Evaluation of Turkish choral music through styles in the 20th century**", with four generations of composers, lists of their works – a cappella and with an accompaniment. The author's clear position on their contribution is impressive.

Central to the study are chapters four and five.

The **fourth chapter** – "**Problems of youth choirs and an overview of the situation in Turkey in the end of the 20th and the beginning of 21st century**", depicts the picture of youth choirs in the country in an analytically critical tone, tracing in detail the specifics of working with them. (4.2. "The problems"), specifies some economic problems (4.3.) and mechanisms for the promotion of choral music (4.4.), as well as the deficiency of academic research in the field of choral music "(4.5.). The systematization of the observations of Mete Gökçe is applicable to any choral culture. Through it, the achievements and problems during the different periods can be revealed (thus analogies can be made with

² Here I use the term "choral work", argued in historical meaning by Prof. Agapia Balareva, Dr. Sc in her book "Choral work in Bulgaria – from the middle of the XIX century to the year 1944" (Sofia: BAS, 1992). "Choral work" includes all choral performances and related creativity, as well as the motivation of the participants in them and the audience's reflection.

Bulgarian choral culture and the existence of youth choirs during the decades). The main problem of youth choirs in Turkey is the repertoire and the repertory culture, the need to include various choral works such as style and musical language. It is especially important that the repertoire is in line with the technical capabilities of the ensembles. The presented picture reveals a still insufficient - according to the author - attention and the lack of cultural policy in this respect, which includes the insufficient publishing activities. The various stages in the methods of exploiting choral works and other important problems related to choral work are commented in detail.

Chapter five – "The study of the project" National Youth Choir 100 Voices "in the framework of the development of youth choirs in Turkey" is self-reflective, very inventive and contributing. It could be very useful for any choir conductor as shared and analysed successful accomplishment in modern choral work, offering the idea and options for its implementation, including specific actions of organizational and financial nature.

I will emphasize that in the description the project is correctly defined as "an innovative synthesizing endeavor with its own educational programs that ensure the development of our national choral music in the academic and social structure, according to international choral standards and in the areas needed by our country. The "100 Voices" National Youth Choir is programmed to share a musical outlook and life perspective based on interpersonal love and humanity; to reach a world of artistic meaning, to carry out current and promising production, as well as to be personally happy, aware, positive in our professional life and to create awareness of the musical future. The "100 Voices" Choral Schools, which continue their training during the winter and summer months, conduct support training in various fields with courses on many topics in the field of performance training, by conducting education and choral training, and present their results through active program model with many concerts, seminars and

workshops. For the first time in Turkey, the project is holding a large gathering in the field of choral music.” (5.2. "The main goals of the National Youth Choir" 100 voices").

I included such a long quote from the Abstract (p. 35), because all activities, presented in a synthesized way, are formulated and analysed by the author and this is his indisputable contribution and the semantic centre of the dissertation.

The 54 photos from the camp trainings of the National Youth Choir "100 Voices”, which are included, illustrate the activities of the National Youth Choir and of Mete Gökçe (pp. 134 – 159).

The **Conclusion** (Dissertation, pp. 160 – 163; Abstract, pp. 40 – 42) correctly summarizes what was done in the dissertation. Emphasis is also placed on creativity in music, which is not a specific object of analysis in the work and is indicated as an additional activity in preparation for writing the dissertation, including acquaintance with the work of Bulgarian and foreign authors for this composition.

The broad historical context in which the history of Turkish music and specifically of Turkish choral music during the period of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey is traced is emphasized. The place of Turkish music, in particular of Turkish choral music, in the world music culture is analytically presented. The “characteristics of the culture of folk and palace music in the Ottoman Empire, their educational structures, the ways of their performance, the structure of the collective singing cultures in the traditional and religious structure of the Turkish musical culture are carefully and in detail clarified. The stages of Western style changes in the musical structure are presented, paying special attention to the prominent personalities; the first choral structures of the early

Republican period are being systematically presented". Particularly important is the conclusion that "the first steps in the development of a polyphonic choral culture were carried out by the youth choirs."

The discussed issues are laid out in the text clearly, the introduced tables and lists of works illustrate the author's conclusions.

Describing the specifics of choral work in Turkey, an emphasis is placed on the lack of "polyphonic choral music in the general education system in Turkey, the lack of interest in singing in a choir (especially in youth choirs), finding that the main reasons for these shortcomings is the lack of academic training of choir conductors who work with the training choirs". I will also add the difficult switch from monodic performance and perception of music to polyphony of the Western European type.

The conclusions made about training in music, professional qualifications of the conductors, the role of composers, etc., as well as various problems of organizational nature are well presented.

The National Youth Choral School "100 Voices" is exhibited as a model that can serve "as a solution" and "makes a national contribution to overcoming the problems of Turkish youth choral music" in a broad context.

I fully accept the above listed in this paper 7 contributions. I will place a special emphasis on contribution № 7 – "The main innovative solution to the problems presented in the dissertation is the one-of-a-kind organization "100 Voices" National Choir School created by the author, which is considered as a model of effective problem solving and development perspective for youth choral music in the country".

The abstract summarizes the dissertation in full and correctly.

9 accomplished activities are indicated as **publications**. It would be clearer and more correct if the participation in scientific forums was separated (2) from the interviews, links to various events, etc., which testify to the great professional artistic activity of the dissertator.

CONCLUSION

Having in mind the topic, the approach to it and the contributions to the realization of the set tasks and goals, as well as the artistic activity of the dissertation, **I propose to award Mete Gökçe for his dissertation on “YOUTH CHOIRS IN TURKEY IN THE LATE 20th CENTURY AND EARLY 21st CENTURY – PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES” the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", professional field 8.3. Music and dance art.**

Congratulations to the author and his supervisor Prof. Yavor Konov, Dr. Sc. for the final result.

I wish success to the dissertation in its future activities!

Sofia, April 27, 2021

Prof. Elisaveta Valchinova-Chendova, Dr. Sc.