

## **REVIEW**

**by Prof. Dr. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak,**

**professional field 8.3 Music and dance art,**

**lecturer at AMTII "Prof. Assen Diamandiev",**

**for the dissertation of Mete Gökçe,**

**PhD candidate in the Music Department of NBU – Sofia, on the topic:**

**"YOUTH CHOIRS IN TURKEY IN THE LATE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AND  
THE EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY – PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES"**

**for the award of the scientific and educational degree "Doctor",**

**field of higher education 8. Arts,**

**professional field 8.3. "Music and dance"**

### **Short biography of Mete Gökçe, PhD candidate:**

Born in 1975 in Ankara, Mete Gökçe completed his Bachelor in Music degree at *Gazi University* in Ankara, and his postgraduate qualification in Choral Conducting at *Çukurova University* in Adana from 2008 to 2010. M. Gökçe is enrolled in the PhD in Music Program at New Bulgarian University, Sofia since 2014. He works as a lecturer at *COMU – Çanakkale University "March 18th"*, one of the leading universities in Turkey, and at the Faculty of Pedagogy at *Niğde University*. As a teacher, Mete Gökçe organizes master classes in choral conducting, conducts seminars, and participates in juries at international competitions. The doctoral candidate is a holder of awards and distinctions from

a number of choral forums. He is particularly interested in the history and problems of the vocal art in Turkey, to which he dedicates several publications. He has released two compact discs. His master's thesis is entitled *The Effect of Choir Arrangement on Musical Results*. He is the leader of a number of projects, associations and festivals, most famous among them being "100 Voices", International Choir Festival – Çanakkale, Children's Choir Festival – Çanakkale, Association of Polyphonic Choirs and Arts. Mete Gökçe conducts the university choir of COMU – Çanakkale as well as working as a lecturer in the departments of Pedagogy of Fine Arts and Music Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the same university. He is the winner of the special award "Culture and Art" of the Eastern Mediterranean University Rectorate and the award of the Rotary Club of Çanakkale for 2014.

### **Content of the dissertation**

The dissertation outlines the problems in the field of Turkish choral music and gives suggestions for their solutions. Based on a research of the projects and on the results of the activities of the National Youth Choir "100 Voices", the text presents the systematic formation of youth choirs in Turkey, their popularization and their significance in formal education. The research is also useful with its compilation of a comprehensive bibliography that would help future researchers.

In a volume of 173 pages, the text, written in English, consists of an introduction, 5 chapters, and a conclusion, reference to the contributions, bibliography, images, tables and documentary photos. The quoted literature contains 35 titles, mainly in Turkish. In the introduction the author presents the objectives of the research, the resulting tasks and the general conclusions. The dissertation calls to consider the topic in a broad historical context, as being particularly important for *"revealing the general situation of youth choirs and illuminating the prospects for them"* (p. 8 of the abstract).

**Chapter One** – in "*Assessing the History of Choral Research in Turkey from the 1970s to the Early 21st Century*", the dissertation provides a historical overview of the factors that led to the emergence of choral art in Turkey. The two main types of development of Turkish music are being analysed – folk and traditional court music. Court music emerged as a synthesis of the Ottoman and Anatolian periods, developed under the influence of Arab and Iranian cultures; it was based on the modal system commonly known as Maqam. Interestingly enough, the traditions of group performance are dominant in court music, which, along with religious and folk music precedes the art of choral singing. The author points out that the transition from the Ottoman to the Republican period pushed forward the evolution of Turkish education in music, enabling Western European philosophy and culture to find a fertile ground for development. According to Mete Gökçe, the end of the 70s was fundamental for the development of professional choral art in Turkey, as specialized institutions were established, a number of festivals and competitions – initiated, and new choir formations appeared, thus marking a great progress of creativity.

In the **second chapter** – "*Types of choral singing in Turkey in the 20th century*", main object of the study is the position of music and choral education in school, the purpose of choral art in the education system, its place in extracurricular activities and its importance for gathering together gifted children, which are attracted by the art of singing. The author describes the main models of vocal ensembles, how to initiate academic education in choral conducting, and the variety of festivals, including seminars and courses. The text introduces the foundation of the first professional mixed choir at the Turkish Radio and Television in the 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the first Turkish music pedagogues and choir conductors. The emergence of choral varieties, classified in detail is being analysed, as well as the insufficient academic training of those working with school choirs. The status of the discipline "choral music" within the

higher education system, the established choral conducting workshops, the master classes at the State Mixed Choir at the Ministry of Culture of Turkey are being studied and discussed. A list of names of the leading contemporary Turkish choral conductors with significant contribution to Turkish choral music includes 13 names, including that of doctoral candidate Mete Gökçe. In the general assessment, finalizing the second chapter, the author of the dissertation concludes: *In this context, it is established that the path followed by young people who would like to develop in the field of choral music and to be educated and trained as choral conductors in academic aspect, continues to be their training and participation in various conducting courses in Turkey and in Europe* (p. 24).

In the **third chapter**, PhD candidate Mete Gökçe presents choral works by modern Turkish composers, which have already been included in the *Catalogue of Turkish Composers*, 2006, by musicologist Ersin Antep.

*"Problems of youth choirs and an overview of the situation in Turkey in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century."* is the **fourth chapter** of the dissertation. It highlights the shortcomings and obstacles to achieving high choral mastery in Turkey's education system. Mete Gökçe touches on various issues of choral performance in the country from different points of view, based on his personal experience and many years of practice. He commented on the insufficient number of hours of music lessons in primary schools, the lack of specialized conducting departments in Arts universities, the scarce training in voice in order *"to determine the choral group according to the characteristics of the voice and to choose good vocal exercises according to the problems in the choral groups"* (p. 28 of the Abstract), musical analysis, performing skills, styles, playing the score and other fundamental disciplines needed to bring up a highly professional choir chorus master. Mete Gökçe concludes that *"Starting with the children's choir and passing through adolescence and adulthood, the culture of singing together in*

*polyphonic choral music is not widespread in Turkey and is disorganized*" (p. 31, *ibid.*). He also points out the insufficient number of scientific and theoretical research in the field of choral performance.

I consider the **fifth chapter** of the dissertation to be very interesting and of great importance for the research. It presents a project implemented by the author's organization *100 Voices National Choir School*, which is considered to be a model of effectively solving the problems, and a perspective for the development of youth choral music in the country. *"The project is an innovative synthesizing endeavour 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"* (p. 35).

*"One Hundred Voices"* is a current model, successfully launched in 2014. It has its own educational programs, through which it is possible to develop Turkish choral music in academic and social structures in such a way that the training is carried out in Europe and the world. It includes seminars and workshops, classes in music theory, solfeggio, music history, choral conducting, scores, vocal performance, music psychology, rehearsals and concerts. There are 3 choral formations, which create conditions for working in accordance with the qualities and level of each group. The National Youth Choral School *"100 Voices"* is a successful model of overcoming the problems of Turkish choral music.

The author brings up seven important moments of his research:

1. The history of Turkish music is being viewed for the first time from a cultural point with a thorough research on the stages of development of polyphonic choral music within the Ottoman traditional music and the influence of the Western vocal tradition on Turkish culture. The characteristics of folk, court and religious music in the Ottoman Empire, their educational structures and purpose are clarified.

2. The text introduces prominent choral conductors, composers and choral works, which are essential for creating a modern Turkish choral school. For the first time, emphasis has been placed on the origins and evolution of youth choirs in Turkey over the last 30-40 years. Based on the author's selection and analytical commentary, a chronology of choral conductors, composers and choral works has been compiled.

3. Classifications of choirs, building up and realization of a repertoire suitable for the respective types of choirs is being an object of research for the first time in Turkish musicological literature.

4. For the first time, emphasis is placed on the role of music teachers in the creation, management, performances, and overall activities and impact on society in Turkey, which is a society with a high percentage of young people.

5. For the first time in Turkish research and pedagogical literature, the training of choral conductors and the need to build an academic system in choral performance – for musical literacy, solfeggio knowledge and skills, professional culture, voice training, organizational issues, conducting technique, rehearsal technique and discipline, stage behaviour, concert standards, is being discussed.

6. Questions about the psychology of a conductor, chorister and ensemble are raised for the first time in Turkish musicological literature. The observations also include personal experience of the doctoral candidate in terms of creating and leading choirs, as well as his personal experience in organizing and conducting choral festivals.

7. The main innovative solution of the problems presented in the dissertation is the one-of-a-kind organization *100 Voices National Choir School* created by the author, which is perceived as a model of effective problem solving and development perspective for youth choral music in the country.

I confirm the contributions of the research mentioned by Mete Gökçe, as they are a result of his many years of teaching and creative work. The shared personal experience in theoretical and practical terms is a testimony to the author's contribution to the establishment and development of choral performance in Turkey.

Being aware of the research supervisor's, Prof. Yavor Konov, Dr. Sc. huge impact on the successfully completed dissertation of Mete Gökçe, I would like to express my sincere congratulations.

In connection with the dissertation the following 9 publications have been made:

1. Gökçe, Mete (2009). A General Assessment on The Earnings of the Turkish Choral Festival from The Perspective of the Social Functions of Choral Music, On 38<sup>th</sup> ICANAS Music Culture and Education, Ankara Atatürk Culture, Language and History High Agency Publications. Ankara-Turkey, <https://www.ayk.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/GÖKÇE-Mete-KORO-MÜZİĞİNİN-TOPLUMSAL-İŞLEVLERİ-AÇISINDAN-TÜRKİYE-KOROLAR-ŞENLİĞİNİN-KAZANDIRIŞLARI-ÜZERİNE-GENEL-BİR-DEĞERLENDİRME.pdf>
2. Gökçe, Mete (2015). Write the Choral Music in Turkey, Music Journal, Web Portal Columnist, <http://www.musikidergisi.com/yazar-112-turkiyede-koro-muzigini-yazmak>
3. Gökçe, Mete (2016). Impressions from Istanbul and Konya, Music Journal, Web Portal Columnist, <http://www.musikidergisi.com/yazar-140-konya'dan-istanbul'dan-izlenimler>
4. Gökçe, Mete (2016). Is there a Turkish madrigal? Music Journal, Web Portal Column, <http://www.musikidergisi.com/yazar-148-turk-madrigali-var-midir>

5. Gökçe, Mete (2018). Traditional Turkish Music and Collective Singing, II. Scientific Forum for Arts, Sofia, NBU
6. Gökçe, Mete (2018). Choirs Unite People, Tedx Talk, Adana-Turkey, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATEblorcg9E&t=3s>
7. Gökçe, Mete (2019). Çanakkale Choral Festival – New International Çanakkale Choral Competition in 2019, III. Scientific Forum for Arts, Sofia, NBU
8. Gökçe, Mete (2019). If Everybody Sing, TV Program, Presenter and Consultant, Turkish Radio and Television, Six Episodes, Ankara-Turkey, <https://www.latest.facebook.com/watch/?v=525983591515959>, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2602299563127262>
9. Gökçe, Mete (2020). Interview with Ahter Destan on Children's Songs from Generation to Generation, Hürriyet Newspaper Gösteri Journal, Number: 332, Page: 30-32, ISSN: 1300-5839.

In support of all of the above written, I have come to the following **conclusion**:

The PhD candidate meets the national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". The dissertation possesses scientific and practical qualities. I agree with the contributions made by the candidate. I consider these publications to be sufficient. All this gives me reason to propose to the esteemed panel to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art to PhD candidate Mete Gökçe.

April 08, 2021

(Prof. Dr. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak)