

**REVIEW**

**from**

**Yavor Svetozarov Konov,**

(professional field 8.3. "Music and dance art")

Dr., Ph.D., Professor of Polyphony

place of work: Department of Music, New Bulgarian University - Sofia,

**of the dissertation for acquisition**

**of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor**

**(professional field 8.3. "Music and dance art")**

**of Master MILKO DOYCHEV MILKOV**

on the topic

**"CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION PROBLEMS**

**IN PIANO CHAMBER AND SOLO MUSIC "**

Scientific adviser: Prof. Dr. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova

Department of Music, NBU - Sofia 2020

The dissertation submitted to me for review is set forth on 114 pages, in a volume close to that of BDS (1800 characters / page), in which there are a number of musical examples, descriptions of concert programs and others.

But first: **the most important** thing for me from the doctoral student's **biography**.

Master **Milko Doychev Milkov** was born in 1965 in Varna, where he graduated from the piano music school, and then the class of professors Julia and Konstantin Ganevi at BDK (now NMA) in Sofia. According to the autobiography provided to me, he specializes in piano at the Academy of Music "Santa Cecilia" - Rome (Italy) with Sergio Perticaroli and chamber music with Felix Ayo. Participates in the Master Classes in Interpretation of Marcello Abbado (Italy), Germain Mounier (France) and Lev Naumov (Russia). Winner of the first prize in the National Competition "Svetoslav Obretenov" - Provadia (1978); He is a laureate of the International Competition for Pianists "Senigallia" - Italy (1989) and the International Competition for Young Musicians "Trofeo di Tortona" - Italy (1993).

Milko Milkov has given concerts with recitals, concerts with chamber music and as a soloist in orchestras in Bulgaria and abroad (Austria, Italy, South Africa, South Korea, Greece and Russia), including prestigious local and foreign national and international festivals. He has played with a number of famous Bulgarian and foreign musicians. He has recorded for BNT and BNR. He has made 4 CDs.

Since 1998 he has been teaching piano at Kwangju University - South Korea, since 2001 he has been at NBU (where he teaches piano and chamber music). You can see more biographical data about M. Milkov on the NBU website:

[https://ecatalog.nbu.bg/default.asp?V\\_Year=2020&PageShow=teacherpresent&P\\_Menu=teachers&Fac\\_ID=3&P\\_ID=844&T\\_ID=2982&l=0](https://ecatalog.nbu.bg/default.asp?V_Year=2020&PageShow=teacherpresent&P_Menu=teachers&Fac_ID=3&P_ID=844&T_ID=2982&l=0).

I have been working at NBU for 10 years now, during this period I have had official relations with my colleague Milko Milkov. We are not close, so in this sense I think and write impartially. We talked sometimes, musically - I found his great love (even to the point of affect) for music and especially for playing the piano.

Born with talent, M. Milkov has received a rich professional education, including abroad. I was at his concert with the violinist Dimitar Burov (on June 10, 2013 in Hall 9 of the National Palace of Culture in Sofia, see:

<https://www.btv.bg/video/shows/predi-obed/videos/klasika-za-tseniteli.html>): was a high class of playing and making music, captivating, with this type of "controlled improvisation" (my term, JK), which is explicitly mentioned in M. Milkov's dissertation (see below in this review).

I have witnessed the gratitude and respect on the part of our students for M. Milkov, as a piano teacher and musician in general. He gives master classes abroad and at home. I read very flattering assessments of the pianist and musician Milko Milkov by world-famous musicians. All this gives me reason to emphasize his professional qualities.

And now - **my own review, which is consistent with the requirement to evaluate, not to retell the dissertation.**

The current doctorate is of the **executive type**. The dissertation is structured in Introduction, 3 chapters, Epilogue and Conclusions, lists of related concerts and publications, Bibliography and Contributions of the dissertation, Reviews of concert performances of the doctoral student.

The chapters of the dissertation are the following:

Chapter 1. Theoretical and terminological basis. (It deals with issues of interpretation and art in it, chamber music and music making. Performance - goals and objectives, preparation, shared personal experience - both performing and pedagogical. Very valuable and interesting sharing of personal experience by adult musicians with whom the pianist and doctoral student M. Milkov has worked and played. The dissertation emphasizes the importance of playing from as accurate as possible to the author notes - if possible urtext. Always be aware of what are the author's requirements and instructions, and which - The doctoral student also emphasizes the importance of not listening to the work you are beginning to study,

not listening to it in other people's performances - and only then "consult "at least a few" ... and do not copy anything!

He also emphasizes that the practice process is a time in which "all elements and components of the performed plays must be specified, established and fixed to the smallest detail" (from page 25 of the dissertation). The doctoral student also emphasizes the importance of a sufficient number of repetitions, even if they are well distributed over time ... He also touches on the extremely important issue of stage improvisation - in the interpretive aspect - and within the appropriate limits! - that only it can make the performance of the work recreational and unique, hence captivating. "When the performer is confident and calm, being prepared in this way, he can trust a momentary impulse during the performance; to obey the inspiration of the moment; to be left free to the act of making music "and to create" and this mystery that brings such pleasure, satisfaction and joy to the artist and the audience! " (p. 27).

Chapter 2. Interpretive problems in chamber and solo performance (and in particular pianistic performance questions and approaches in Beethoven's triple concerto (1803) and in that for 2 pianos and Poulenc's orchestra - performed by the doctoral student in 2013 and 2014). In this part of his dissertation M. Milkov commented on the stages of the pianist's work - in his independent preparation, as well as those of making and recreating the work with the other soloists and with the conductor and the orchestra. The dissertation makes descriptions and analyzes, shares personal preferences, assessments, recommendations and experience, which prove the detailed multifaceted knowledge of the subject and the undoubted personal act of writing the dissertation. Particularly valuable are the aspects of the balance between the 3 solo parties in Beethoven's triple concerto (highlighted by the doctoral student), highlighted by the doctoral student. Similarly for Poulenc's double concert - the doctoral student offers us various references, references, author's and / or foreign, comments, instructions, recommendations but I will not dwell on the citation. The doctoral student correctly indicates the music editions he works with: 1) Ludwig van Beethoven – Konzert Fur Klavier, Violine, Violoncello und Orchester, Opus 56, G. Henle Verlag, Munchen, 1996, and 2) Francis Poulenc – Concerto en re mineur pour deux pianos et orchestre, Réduction pour deux pianos par l'auteur. Editions Salabert, Paris, 1933. In addition, the doctoral student points out and comments on several sublime recordings of both works.

Chapter 3. Classical performing and interpretive approach when performing or recording pieces of popular music (including works by Chopin, Granados, Marcello-Bach, Vivaldi, Massenet, Gluck, L. Pipkov...): writes about the specifics of the small form ( in parallel with the great one, indicating a number of large-scale, complex and difficult piano and interpretive piano works performed by him), shared personal experience on issues of choice and sequence of pieces, use of digital piano (characteristics, possibilities, choice of parameters) for MIDI recording, incl. and with a synthetic orchestra - based on the recording by the doctoral student and the realization of a CD in 2016.

The reference sources of the dissertation: the Bibliography described in the dissertation is in the modest volume of only 4 texts in 1 collection in Bulgarian and one book in Russian - I accept that this came from the specific topic of the dissertation and the fact of its performing nature, presenting personal thoughts, experiences and pianistic practice of the doctoral student. Accordingly, he presents a list of 5 musical scores (German, French and English editions). A series of about 70 websites follows.

The issues of performance and interpretation are always relevant for the musician - historically, theoretically, practically, artistically. In this sense, the significance of the issues studied in the dissertation and its scientific and applied side are indisputable. The dissertation has well-formulated goals and objectives - and they are completed and achieved in accordance with the chosen research methodology. As I have already written, I have no doubt that the work is a personal work of the doctoral student, with his own contribution to the collection of empirical data and their interpretation - his personal experience is presented in many ways and many times. The level of knowledge of the issue is high, the reference sources used (including the personal archive of the doctoral student, mentioned in footnotes in the text of the dissertation) are in integral interrelation with the research. There are a significant number of correct references to authors in the text. There is no doubt that in the dissertation there is not only a substantiated and developed model of the research, but that it is also practically conducted - I note again that this is a **doctorate in performing arts**.

I am pleased to emphasize how READABLE this dissertation is! (Be it ever so "naive" at times... But fair enough! I have suffered similar "reproaches" for my texts...) Proof of essence and practical applicability.

The abstract (in factual volume of about 25 pages on BDS) sufficiently reflects the dissertation, in structure and essence.

Congratulations to the supervisor Prof. Dr. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova.

I generally accept the doctoral student's contributions to his dissertation. For me the most valuable are the doctoral student's shared experience of work and making music with world-renowned performers and pedagogues, as well as the detailed analysis of the doctoral student's details and aspects of chamber music, in its various stages of preparation and implementation. Of course, within the framework of this performing doctoral dissertation - the concert performances on stage and recordings of the doctoral student, as well as the impressive total number of more than 26 thousand auditions of his recordings uploaded on the Internet by M. Milkov.

**I summarize:** The material used in the study is trustworthy. The dissertation - the related concerts of M. Milkov and his text, resp. the doctoral student's contributions prove that his colleague Milkov has the necessary historical and theoretical knowledge in the field and sufficient ability for independence in conducting research. Let me say again that the personal participation of the doctoral student is indisputable. The publications of the dissertation have made it public to the necessary extent: 3 text publications in scientific magazine (Young Scientific Forum,, NBU) and a number of audiovisual (17 in you tube, 3 in Bandcamp, 15 in SoundCloud and 19 in TWINE).

## **CONCLUSION:**

**In the light of the above mentioned merits of the doctoral student, I HIGHLY RECOMMEND that an educational and scientific Doctor's degree BE awarded to Master MILKO DOYCHEV MILKOV, based on his executive and text doctoral studies on the topic "CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION PROBLEMS IN PIANO CHAMBER AND SOLO MUSIC" (NBU - Sofia, 2020). I hope that this will be the assessment of the other colleagues from the scientific jury.**

(Yavor Konov, Ph.D., Ph.D., Professor  
Department of Music, NBU)

Sofia, October 26, 2020