

## REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Gheorghi Asenov Arnaudov,

Professor at New Bulgarian University, professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

in the professional field 8.3 "Music and Dance Art" with candidate Nayden Vladislavov Todorov

The dissertation of Nayden Vladislavov Todorov on *“DEVELOPMENT OF SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IN BULGARIA. HISTORY, CURRENT ISSUES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS”* is developed within a truly significant volume of 258 pages, written in Times New Roman 12 point font at the narrowest spacing, something that actually amounts to a volume of 399 pages. Moreover, let me say it from the very beginning: 399 pages of an extraordinary research.

The text of the dissertation contains an **Introduction**, four chapters entitled respectively: **Chapter One**: Theoretical formulations of the symphony orchestra problem, **Chapter Two**: Analysis of influencing factors on the performance of symphony orchestras in Bulgaria, **Chapter Three**: Validation of a Model of the Importance of Strategy as an Influencing Factor on the Performance of the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra, **Chapter Four**: Implementing Organizational Change through Improving the Management of a Symphony Orchestra, Summary and Recommendations to the Object of Study, **Conclusion, Contributions of the Dissertation, Publications on the dissertation, Bibliography and siteography, Appendices.**

I should say at the outset that the subject is extremely important, not only scientifically but also in terms of applied science. This importance is due to many factors. First of all, I should point out that such a topic has not been explored and commented on in our musicological literature, and I am not aware of any analogue. In addition, the scope of the subject and the questions it raises are not limited to the field of the humanities, but can

also be applied to the social, economic and legal sciences. And such an interdisciplinary view makes the study extremely contributive. Next, I would like to point out that the author of the text of the thesis is one of the most prominent experts both in the field of the administration of the so-called music establishments and the state administration, and also in the field of the development of culture in Bulgaria as a whole. I would like to add that Nayden Todorov is a great Bulgarian musician who contributes greatly to the development of music in Bulgaria, especially symphonic music, a conductor thanks to whom we have the opportunity to be part of the world music scene and enjoy the most famous musical artists from all over the world. Reading his text, therefore, is not only a tribute to his work as a doctoral student, but also a real insight into an area of musical life that is so complex in terms of both organisation and system.

I should like to conclude here that not only the choice of subject, but also the overall research and development of the logical structure of the text are significant and contributing. The logical exposition of such a complex problem has been carried out in an appropriate and highly accomplished manner. It includes an initial exposition of theoretical propositions, an analysis of the context, elaborations with examples from the development and functioning of the National Philharmonic Orchestra, and finally an exposition of new principled approaches to symphony orchestra management.

I would like to point out that the author has already formulated the aims and objectives of the thesis in a very precise and clear way in the introduction. This can be seen in the clarity with which he outlines the topicality of the subject, its relation to the complex and dynamic socio-cultural environment in our country, and the constant attempts at reform, which are often carried out without analysis of the context and the influencing factors, without (in the author's words) *"testing different models to establish the importance of strategy as an influencing factor on the performance of symphony orchestras"* and subsequent evaluations. The subject of the research is the current state of the national symphony orchestra, as well as the history and development of orchestral practice in Bulgaria. The methodological and applied aspects of the research are aimed at finding approaches and identifying opportunities for improving and refining the results of the work of the participants in all this so complex "mechanism" called an orchestra. The main

objective of the dissertation is to explore the history, development and contemporary context of symphonic work in Bulgaria. Special attention is given to the situation of the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra. On the basis of such a historical and contextual analysis, the author also examines the possibilities of applying in our musical life *"innovative aspects and organisational practices of the best European and world philharmonic structures"* in order to *"bring about organisational change by improving the management of symphony orchestras"*. Thus defined, the objectives of the study provide its main tasks, which are related to the establishment of a theoretical basis for the management of symphony orchestras, the historical analysis and analytical study of the state of orchestras in Bulgaria, the critical examination of cultural reforms in Bulgaria, the approbation of models and the search for ways to build the legislative framework for the management of the performing arts in Bulgaria.

The initial, first chapter presents the meaning of orchestras, their varieties, categorisations and examples from the world practice. Types of orchestras are presented according to the act of their creation and according to their functions and operational goals, types of orchestra ownership, models of relationships between the "institutions" of orchestra and hall with possible variations of relationships between musical ensembles and hall management. This part of the thesis details the concepts of 'philharmonic' and 'symphony orchestra' and the significance and impact of this typology on the status of musical ensembles.

The second chapter focuses on orchestras in Bulgaria – 'philharmonic orchestras' and 'symphony orchestras'. The two Bulgarian orchestras with 'philharmonic' status, those of the Sofia and Pleven Philharmonics, are presented, with precise details of their staff 'ownership' of halls for rehearsal processes and concert performances. An in-depth overview of the history of the development of musical and symphonic institutions in Bulgaria from 1878 to the present day is presented. Their development is grouped into three stages, the first covering the period up to 1944, the second from 1944 to 1989 and the third from 1990 to 2020. Starting with the post-liberation enthusiasm for the creation of musical ensembles, which were *'in the hands of amateurs, in many cases educated abroad'*, the dissertation highlights the fact that most of the ensembles did not survive long due to a lack

of good organisation, structure, financial or organisational problems. The second stage of the development of symphony orchestras is examined, including the denationalisation (mainly after 1944) of existing and surviving orchestral structures, the various state institutions involved in the administration of musical ensembles, including the creation of municipal orchestras.. and above all the final cessation of private initiative. The formation of a "*comprehensive state policy towards the development of symphonic art*" is also studied and analyzed. The third stage, the period after 1990, is characterized by the continuous reformation of state cultural institutes and attempts to adapt them to market conditions. The creation of private orchestras is also examined. Different types of orchestras, typical for this period - symphonic, symphonette, chamber, accompaniment orchestras - are examined. An analysis is also made of the distribution of orchestras according to the type of their funding - state orchestras with musicians on contract, municipal orchestras with musicians on contract and finally private orchestras with musicians on fee. A chronology and an in-depth analysis of the course of cultural reforms in the performing arts in Bulgaria is presented, as well as a contribution analysis of the reforms carried out over the last 30 years in the professional music sector, from devolution with the creation of the National Centre for Music and Dance, and follow-up actions, decrees on the transformation of institutes, the creation of open stages and state cultural institutes of national importance, subsequent reforms, cuts, the introduction of delegated budgets in 2011, the reform of 2011. With unflinching precision and based on his deep knowledge, the dissertation carries out a contributory critical analysis of the reforms carried out with evidence presented and contributory suggestions for understanding and interpreting the concepts. Suggestions are presented for seeking approaches to clear, accurate and proper organization of "*costs, increased interest and attendance, increased revenues, but also a more diverse repertoire, more diverse performers, higher artistic level, educational and social activities and high prestige in society. This should be the point of a reform, and this is what has been lacking in our country.*"

The next chapter is entitled "Testing a model of the importance of strategy as an influencing factor on the performance of the Sofia Philharmonic". The history of the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra is presented with all the stages of its transformation over the years, including an accurate analysis of a presented "*incorrect historical line of the early history*"

of the orchestra. The current state of the Sofia Philharmonic is very accurately and effectively brought out with a description of the organs and the management structure, something which is, by the way, carried out in the finest detail and quite naturally with exceptional knowledge of the subject matter. In this chapter, the dissertator has implemented a SWOT analysis of the state of the Sofia Philharmonic as of December 31, 2022, based on Albert Humphrey's model, and the analysis examines four factors that identify the state and problems of the institution Building on all this and on the deep and meaningful analysis implemented, Nayden Todorov presents a "Development Strategy for the Sofia Philharmonic". In it can be seen the ideas and cultural philosophy of the dissertation, the presentation of the mission of the Philharmonic, its structure, magnificent ideas about the material base, the development of the sustainability of the institution, the personnel policy and the building of financial sustainability, the concert programming and the repertoire of the orchestra, the work on building audiences and cultural policy.

The fourth chapter presents ideas and models for the management of symphony orchestras. This is a topic of great importance in today's society. It corresponds to different perspectives on the arts, which are seen by some as a "cultural industry" and by others as a "social superstructure" of society. Nayden Todorov is, of course, an advocate of the second understanding. Management models from around the world are under scrutiny, with a focus on the pioneer of symphonic work, Germany.

On this basis, the dissertator concludes that *"the relations of the institution 'orchestra' with external structures are much richer"* and offers his classification of these relations divided into four groups. These are the relationships within the performing arts, those within the virtual environment, those with the urban environment and finally, those with the various arts-related industries. A really useful grouping. Here I would single out as particularly contributory the thesis of the dissertator that *"the musical arts exist in a state of quasi-market, but at the same time their impact on society precisely as 'arts' far exceeds the economic benefits of their existence"*. It presents a very precise systematisation of the politics of orchestras according to the different models discussed by Nayden Todorov, such as the European (German) model, the American model and the Bulgarian model. Models that have different principles of management, organisation of concert life and

communication with the audience. The audience and communication with it are brought out as a determining factor and basis for the transformation and rise of a society.

Throughout the entire text of the study, throughout the logical structure of this dissertation, which is so well constructed, it is evident that Nayden Todorov possesses an extremely high degree of knowledge of the state of the problem, as well as clarity and broad knowledge of the existing context and not only that. On the basis of his in-depth knowledge, he proposes models and approaches for future development, for the application of world experience and for a thorough work that aims to raise our culture to an extremely high level. The dissertator manages to skillfully both accurately and clearly draw on his experience as a superb concert performer and manager and to precisely remove himself from that experience and begin to observe a number of processes in detail, something that helps him to achieve some truly magnificent contributions in his research. Thus examined, the dissertation text shows a high degree of congruence of the methodology and research methodology chosen by Nayden Todorov with the stated aim and objectives of the dissertation. The text, with its numerous examples, is evidence of the dissertation's immense contribution to the collection and analysis of empirical data.

The text of Nayden Todorov's dissertation is based on citations and references to a representative number of authors, with a total of 48 book titles listed in the Bibliography and Siteography section (a wonderful name for such a section, by the way) - 34 of which are in Cyrillic and 14 are Latin publications, 239 links to significant world encyclopaedias, normative acts or world-famous institutions in the field of culture, as well as 22 titles of periodical articles. All of these, as well as numerous links to electronic publications, are cited very correctly and accurately in the body of the dissertation text as footnotes - 318 in total. The materials used - studies, articles, documents, normative acts, etc. show an extremely wide range of knowledge and a very high degree of familiarity with the development and state of symphony orchestras, as well as a very high correspondence of the research with the literature used.

A list of "Publications on the dissertation" is attached to the text of the dissertation in which information on the publications of the PhD student is presented. They present:

1. Todorov, N. (2012). Model of policy for management of modern cultural institution, In. "Business Process Management", PRIMAX, ISBN 978-954-8675-51-2, pp. 53-90 - Study;

2. Todorov, N. (2023). Approbation of a model of the importance of strategy as an influencing factor on the performance of the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra, in Proceedings of scientific studies with authors' collective, "Development of regional social ecosystems in the conditions of digital transformation", Scientific editor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svilena Ruskova, reviewer, Prof. Dr. Veselina Ilieva,

Shumen University "Chernorizets Hrabar", Primax Publishing House, 2023, ISBN 978-619-7242-99-7, Printed by Academic Publishing House of Rusen University, pp. 5-29 - Study;

3. Todorov, N. (2019). The symphony orchestra machine, in J. Artisanin, no. 19, 2019, ISSN 2535-1273, ed. Г. Dyulgerov, pp. 19-38 - Article;

The first two of these publications are studies published in edited collective volumes, and the third publication is an article published in a specialist arts journal. It should be acknowledged that all three publications are in publications that fully comply with the requirements of the Regulations for the Application of the Law on the Availability of Published Materials in Specialized Publications in the Field of Arts.

I am basically familiar with the text of the abstract submitted to me by the dissertation author, which contains 48 pages and very accurately and clearly presents the main points and issues of the dissertation text.

I fully accept the contributions outlined in the text of the dissertation, which are very accurately grouped in two sections. Those of a 'cultural-managerial nature' and those of an 'applied nature'. Here I should single out as particularly valuable the presentation of an integrated criterion system for the evaluation of human resources in the symphony orchestra in Bulgaria, the definitions of the nature of the work of the symphony musician, the substantive and critical analysis of cultural reforms in the musical and performing arts in Bulgaria, the presentation of a legislative framework for the management of the performing arts in Bulgaria, a model of the strategy of the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra.

Thus considered, these contributions are proof that the dissertation work of Naiden Todorov contains original, highly contributive theoretical generalizations and solutions to applied problems in the field of music management and cultural management.

On the basis of my above comments, remarks and reflections, I take the liberty to praise strongly and meritoriously both the entire practical work of Nayden Todorov and the overall work of this highly contributory research and dissertation process. I would also like to congratulate his supervisor Prof. Dr. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova for her work with the dissertation and the assistance she has provided. I would hereby like to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award to Nayden Vladislavov Todorov the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in 8.3 speciality "Music and Dance Art".

Sofia, 08.09.2024.

Prof. Dr. Gheorghi Asenov Arnaudov