

Opinion

from Assoc. Prof. Dr. Veselka Toncheva,

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on the dissertation of

Velichka Chausheva's dissertation

on the subject:

"Place of the song folklore of Bulgaria in the Aural development of adolescent. Possibilities for its application into the educational domain"

for conferment of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor

Professional field 8.3: Music and dance art

The present opinion was formulated and delivered in conformity with Order No. 3-RK-36 / 29 October 2021 of the Rector of the New Bulgarian University, as well as pursuant to Resolution of the First Session of the Academic Jury on the procedure (held in a virtual medium in the period 9-12 November 2021). The dissertation work proposed for defence comprises 202 pages, structured into four chapters and containing three appendices.

The subject of the dissertation study is characterized by relevance of the problems under examination, in view of the ongoing dynamic processes in the modern interpretation of traditional musical folklore and its inclusion in various fields, including the field of education. What is impressive about the work is the practical experience of the dissertator which has provided a good basis for constructing / structuring the text.

Chapter One provides a historical overview of the traditions of music education in some foreign educational systems – Hungary, Austria, Romania, Poland, Denmark, Russia, USA, and Japan. The text traces the history of the general education system in Bulgaria from the Liberation to the present day with a focus on the place occupied by musical folklore in the earliest textbooks and more generally in the concept of music education. The author has also provided a brief historical overview of out-of-school / extracurricular music activities in Bulgaria for the same period. The last section of this chapter is dedicated to globalization and its way of affecting traditional folklore and education.

Chapter Two of the dissertation objectifies the definitions of "classical" and "non-classical" folkloric culture advanced by the author. Clarification of their content is availed by using definitions of fundamental / core concepts such as "folklore", "culture", "stage", etc. The relationships between the two "variants" of folk culture, the similarities and the differences between them are examined through different lenses: oral – written; rural – urban, the roles of performer – listener; the importance of temperament, deciphering and notation to written recording, as well as the technologies for audio recording of folk music; the role of the composer's approach in the processing of folk songs and their contemporary transformations.

I have appreciation for the highly concentrated information content in the first two chapters, but to some extent they bear no particular connection with the subject of the dissertation. At some points, the text states some "elementary truths" and commonplace logical constructs, which reflect no direct references to the object, subject and the objectives of the study. In addition, the text contains some inaccurate assertions, e. g. "The Bulgarian Christian is educated in a ritual way, regardless of the monastic cellar schools" (p. 71), which confuses a characteristic feature of traditional culture with a revivalist educational model. The text features statements that do not correspond to the level of a scholarly work, such as. "Folklore represents a nation's identity" (p. 59) or "The Christian Bulgarian was unaware that he had folklore" (p. 66), as well as statements of essayistic nature, e. g. "Globalization "opened" the eyes of education, but "closed" our hearts for folklore" (p. 49).

Chapters One and Two enclose many functional aspects of the traditional culture (not just music), but are they of relevance for the accomplishment of the author's objectives, and what would that significance be? As regards the title of the dissertation, which is quite specific, its content essentially unfolds in the next two chapters of the text.

The third chapter "Educating the musical hearing of adolescents through the medium of song folklore" opens with a historical overview, only here it is particularly on topic – the preschool music education in Bulgaria from the Liberation to the present day. The text focuses attention on Bulgarian song folklore within [the setting of] this [type of] education and its importance as a factor in the aural development of adolescents. I have found this overview (together with the attendant Appendix 1 comprised of three tables) valuable and contributory, since on the one hand it has synthesized historical experience in the field, and on the other hand, it places V. Chausheva's observations within a specific cultural and historical context.

The chapter centres on the derivation of a model for educating / training the music ear in kindergarten education through the medium of Bulgarian song folklore as a first step in the education and upbringing of the child. For this purpose, the dissertator has outlined specific objectives of this education, among them, in addition to those pertaining to musical pedagogy, there can be found also such as "creating a sense of national belonging" or "to build an appreciative attitude of oneself and others", which are of different order and I find them inappropriate if they are not supported by adequate scientific argumentation.

The derivation of the model is developed in two stages: The first stage relates to singing and has resulted in V. Chausheva's conclusions regarding appropriate tone row for the beginning stages of the musical-aural upbringing through the medium of Bulgarian song folklore in preschool children, namely the trichord for the youngest and tetrachord for the older. Variants are proposed with different interval structure of tone rows in the indicated ambituses.

The author here cites P. Mincheva's statement that "almost each of the tones in the same tonal row can be conclusive", but then there is reference to "awareness of the modal system". What modal system can be perceived in a trichord or tetrachord ambitus and how does this come in agreement with the concept that it is possible for each tone to be final?

Simultaneously with the expansion of the ambitus and the complication of rhythm (and elaboration of isochronism) in subsequent models, a conclusion is drawn in relation to the meter of folk melodies, which goes as follows: "Children can master equally well song patterns, both in even and uneven meter" (p. 124). Suggested examples are in 9/8, 7/8, 13/16. In this section I would point out some inaccuracies of ethnomusicological character – certain tetrachords are listed as modes (the Aeolian, Dorian, Ionian), but practically these are just the first / lower tetrachords of these modes

according to the Glarean classification and this should be specified. This also applies to the first / lower tetrachord of makam hijas, also referred to as makam (p. 124). It is unacceptable for a dissertation text to confuse 13/16 meter as designated, with 7/16 – as it is in reality, and that more than once (pp. 129, 137). An established rule in notational representation of song samples (not just in folk music) states that in cases when each syllable corresponds to a note value of quaver, semiquaver or demi quaver, connecting ribs should not be used, and each note should be represented with a separate tail.

In the second stage, covering the actual work, the dissertator cites the various types of hearing as a general principle, accepted by her as an important basis from which the development and improvement of children's musical abilities should start. Then the question is raised about the formation and development of these musical abilities through the Bulgarian song folklore in view of choosing of a specific local repertoire with dialectal characteristics or such from other regions.

The important steps in learning a new folk song are outlined, which are of value as a personal experience of the author. Indicated next are sizes (13/16, 7 / 8b) and scales / modes (Mixolydian, Makam Hijas) are not included in the pre-school curriculum. Of particular importance to the research and successfully selected are the proposed specimens set in different modes and sizes as examples of the development of melodic hearing, modal and metro-rhythmic sense. Here I would address the proposed song example, which is indicated as pentatonic, but further below it reads "the song is set in pronounced minor mode with omission of II and VI degree" (p. 138). Pentatonics represents an independent tonal genus with its own features and is not a minor mode.

The fourth chapter of the text "Analysis of the place of Bulgarian song folklore in today's music education system of preschool education" outlines the results of surveys taken among parents of children participating in vocal groups, of the children themselves and of the leaders of these groups . Based on the diagrams shown on p. 147 and p. 148, from which it becomes clear that a large percentage of parents listen to folk music, but also that there is a large percentage of them having no professional experience in music, V. Chausheva concludes that "what "backs" the parents' predilection for our folklore may be the love for the folk song, displayed and "transferred" by their child into the family environment" (p. 148). This is one of the hypotheses of this treatise, but to me the argument for its validation is unconvincing.

The conclusions drawn on the basis of the survey analyses and especially the suggested recommendations have mostly a practical value. There are more contributions to be found in the possibilities outlined at the end of the chapter for application of Bulgarian song folklore in modern educational domain, divided into two key cores – organization of musical and educational interaction in and outside kindergarten. On account of the numerous literature and other sources utilized in Chapters One and Two, it is noteworthy that in this Fourth Chapter there is not a single reference to scientific literature relevant to the issue – in areas such as age psychology, pedagogy and theory of education among others. there are available studies that could serve in support of the interpretation of the collected material.

This might have made it possible to avoid usage of concepts from the realm of emotionality, such as "love" ("to create love for the Bulgarian folk song", p. 116), "fondness" ("fondness for the Bulgarian musical tradition", p. 157), "happiness" ("this brings them happiness", p. 153), "joy", "pleasure" ("they will take genuine joy and pleasure in singing", p. 134) or from the area of aesthetics ("to learn to spot the beautiful", p. 116), which are out of place in a scholarly text, unless they are supported by the instruments and terminology of psychology.

The conclusion of the dissertation text summarizes everything that was presented and outlines the most important highlights of the work.

The author presents 3 publications (in conference collections) on the subject of the treatise proffered for defence, corresponding in terms of content to the dissertation text. The number covers the minimum required for admission to public defence of dissertation. The abstract meets the formal and substantive requirements and corresponds to the text of the dissertation. In conclusion, regardless of the remarks already made, the dissertation contains certain scientifically applicable contributions, which have their value and would serve in the practice of music teachers in the preschool age. Chapter Three of the text stands out as the one with the greatest contribution. It offers specific musical models and song examples (along with corresponding tone rows and in selected meters), which can enable the teaching of music to preschool children (kindergarten and even nursery groups) to achieve auditory development in music education through the medium of Bulgarian song folklore . Based on the above, I advise the esteemed scientific jury, in the event of successfully passed defence, to confer to Velichka Chausheva the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in the academic field 8. Arts, Professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art

6 January 2022 Assoc. Prof. Dr. Veselka Toncheva

