

REVIEW

of the dissertation of

VELICHKA GEORGIEVA CHAUSHEVA

NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC,

on the subject:

**„The place of Bulgarian song folklore in the Aural development of adolescent students.
Possibilities for its application into educational domain „**

**for conferment of educational and scientific degree of Doctor professional field 8.3
Music and Dance Art**

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of Education,
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The dissertation of Velichka Georgieva Chausheva is advised for defence, in accordance with all requirements of the *Statutes for Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria* and *Ordinance on the Development of Academic Staff of NBU*. The presented text and scholarly publications cover the Minimal National Requirements.

The total length of the treatise is 202 pages and it consists of introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, bibliography and sources cited or referenced in the text, which comprises 141 sources, of which 140 in Cyrillic, as well as three appendices.

The subject of the dissertation is inspired by the author's professional interest in children education and Bulgarian folklore. Velichka Chausheva has extensive pedagogical experience in teaching folk singing to schoolchildren of different ages. She trained for the discipline in her high-school and university education, as well as functioned as supervisor of a vocal group, as well as a concert and project organizer. The study is based on the proposition that "*... the implementation of purposefully organized education and training of the modern child, situated in a rather versatile acoustic ambience requires more intensive coverage of musical folklore for children as a compulsory repertoire in educational programs / curriculums*" (p. 8), making the following argument: "*The most accessible and effective way to involve children in the magic of Bulgarian musical folklore is to acquaint them to folk songs as early as the kindergarten.*" (p. 7) The author has found the intersection point of her motives and convictions in the conception of education following "specific" methodological steps – models "*to be coordinated in a system for developing and expanding auditory perceptions (aural experience) in children at an early age through the medium of Bulgarian song folklore.*" (p. 6). The subject of the research can be defined as ever relevant and significant. It is a fact that the question of the role of the folk song tradition has excited the minds and inspired the methodological researches of every generation of Bulgarian musicians and pedagogues. As also emphasized in the dissertation, this nation has shown "*Much care and diligence has been expended developing methods and systems for the implementation of musical education and training of adolescents with the resources of Bulgarian musical folklore*" (p. 7). The introduction to the dissertation correctly outlines the object, the subject and the aim of the research. In particular, I shall emphasize the precise formulation of the research methods actively operative in the text. I believe that it might have been necessary to formulate more carefully the

hypotheses to avoid validating them by means of assumptions. Also, the numerous ambitious tasks exceed the dissertation's problems and presuppose its relative thematic dispersion in the first two chapters. On the whole, however, *the introduction shows a clear and deeply motivated concept, as well as desideration to make sense of it in the broadest possible context.*

The centre of the dissertation study is in **Chapter Three, titled "Musical-Aural Upbringing of Adolescents Through the medium of Bulgarian song folklore "**, since it presents the author's development of a system of models. A stable foundation for the constitution of an integral model is the thorough knowledge of the writings of Asen Diamandiev, Penka Mincheva, Slavka Petkova-Marchevska, among others. It is very important to emphasize that the model was conceived and tested in the conditions of extracurricular activities – a vocal group of children of different preschool ages. This has afforded creative freedom to the supervisor and the possibility to work after a methodology of her own, with her choice of algorithm of musical activities and song repertoire. As early as the second chapter, Velichka Chausheva has already formulated the other advantages of working in a vocal group, commenting on the imitation method: "This inherent way of transmitting traditional culture could find expression in the fact that learning and mastering folk songs are not just a one-way process [proceeding] from teacher to 'student', but also among the children themselves. The younger should "hear" the singing of the older ones." (p. 85)

The first stage of the proposed model is interest-arousing, entitled "In substitution of voice warm-up drills". The usual exercises of voice warm-up drills are compounded here with "additional functions exclusively conducive to the aural development of children – in terms of modal and metro-rhythmic sense, melodic, dynamic and timbral hearing." (p. 138) The idea is "in substitution to warm-up drills" to begin by attuning the child's ear and voice to the modal features of Bulgarian folk songs. The texts proposed for the melodic models involve as "lyrical heroes" the child itself, his mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, or elder siblings. Velichka Chausheva proposes a game based on the ancient antiphonal singing (in this case between the master-supervisor and a child). The game approach relies on dialogic patterns, with the text updated as the teacher sings and the child responds in the same lines. Thus, in a series of plot-related phrases, the musical space is traversed by tonal rows deeply embedded in the old cultures. Initially, this happened within the range of the tetrachord: in the Dorian mode (called "Aeolian" by the author, which should be corrected in future publications), Ionic, Phrygian and chromatic (Makam Hijas). The "rotation" of the dialogic model enables each child to participate individually, and all children in the group to listen intently and repeatedly to changes in intonation. The model can be upgraded by being reproduced in different meters and by expanding its tonal range.

I believe that the idea is extremely fruitful and guarantees the cultivation of aural experience and vocal skills in the entire spectrum of modal varieties typical of Bulgarian folklore. Therefore, I believe that the proposed approach (whether in the form of singing or as a playing drill / game exercise) could be applied / utilized in a much wider range in the field of both general education and professional solfege activities, and not only in the case of children, but in the training of future educators / instructors as well.

The second stage – "actual work" – is represented mainly in specific proposals for song repertoire. There is an argument for the conviction (very likely adopted from experience) that children should not be limited as regards more complex types of meters and modes in order to utilize the receptivity of children in accumulating opulent musical ideas. The author states in the summary: "*In the course of the exposition, the idea was conceived that in the second stage, attention should be directed mainly on the development of melodic hearing, modal and metro-rhythmic sense and to some extent the sense of polyphony in adolescents. Each of these aspects, except for the last one, have been outlined in the musical samples of the suggested folk songs.*" (p.

142) It is hoped that in the future this section of the dissertation, along with Appendix 2, would serve as a basis for formulating methodological manuals.

The fourth chapter "**Analyses of the place of Bulgarian song folklore in today's system for music training in preschool education**" provides an analysis of conducted surveys (as presented in Appendix 3). They cover the participants in the examined educational and instructive process – the children themselves, their parents, as well as a larger sample extract of music supervisors from the country. The application of the survey method for this kind of issue is an important but difficult explorative task and it is very disputable to what extent the evidential material the answers can offer is reliable for conclusions. For this reason the evidence applied to the hypotheses is actually also hypothetical. But in general, the effort to achieve feedback and reflect on the correlations between children, family and music supervisors has its essential place in a study, proposing and endorsing the methodological model.

The first two chapters are devoted to the idea of providing extensive information about the importance and applicability of folklore in music education and training, of studying the traditions (both in Bulgaria and worldwide) and of understanding the existence of folklore "*in the new social conditions and practices*" (p. 62). To this end, the second chapter introduces the terms "classical" and "non-classical" folklore (which, however, have found no employment in subsequent chapters). The accumulation of extensive expertise within a wide historical-geographical range is in principle necessary in the course of any research process. However, if the author undertakes an overall publication of the treatise, I would like to extend the following recommendations:

1. There is no need for the text to discuss generally accepted values or terms familiar to the professional community (folklore, culture, art, scene, globalization...), as well as [to embark on] excessively circumstantial historical excursions (which are being conducted repeatedly in Bulgarian musicology). It is my opinion that the development would benefit much by focusing the first two chapters on such phenomena and facts as lead more directly into the research subject as immediately preceding experience or relevant context. As a positive effort of the author in this connection I can point out the tables in Appendix 1, which are very well designed and executed, and at the opening of Chapter Three the relevant publications are presented with the necessary analyses and comments in direct relation to the subject.

2. It is necessary to include an analysis of the current educational conception and respective educational documentation.

3. The development would benefit from enhancing the precision of the terminological apparatus, as well as correcting the definitions of some of the examined tone rows and the examples in 7/16.

The abstract of the dissertation is very well done and fully reveals the content of the dissertation text. Velichka Chausheva has released three publications on the subject. She goes on to identify seven contributions of the dissertation, some of which have systematizing character and therefore I will highlight the first and last, which can receive application and inspire future treatises: "to propose a system of models for the formation and development of musical abilities in children of early age through Bulgarian folk intonations, and to outline a model for work based on the vocal-instrumental basis". The research is invested with much enthusiasm and is devoted to the idea of preserving Bulgarian musical folklore care for each new generation, which should be "immersed" in the folk song tradition from an early age. Efforts were also expended in studying the resources from the field of ethnomusicology, pedagogy, history of education, as well as in providing an empirical database, statistically processed and with the method of content analysis.

In conclusion, I advise the esteemed scientific jury to award Velichka Georgieva Chausheva the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in professional field 8.3. Music and dance art.

04. 01. 2022

Reviewer:

(Prof. Dr. Mariana Buleva)