

OPINION

by Assoc. Dr Nikolay Motsov

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on dissertation

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" submitted by

Vita Guhelli

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Department of Music

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ermila Sekulinova-Schweizer

SUBJECT: "Symbolism in solo songs by Albanian composers of the second half of the 20th century"

The dissertation of the PhD student Vita Guhelli is related to an exciting topic - "Symbolism in solo songs by Albanian composers of the second half of the twentieth century". She concludes that this research aims to analyse the symbology and other aesthetic elements in the art song genre of Albanian music created and censored during the totalitarian, monistic and undemocratic communist ideology. According to her, Symbolism as a movement in Albanian music is little developed; there are no publications or books that explain Symbolism in music in general, and even less in the genre of solo songs. This is indeed the case, and alone this fact carries the contributory character of the work. In her text, she explores in great detail a subject that is interesting and not so popular.

Part of Vita Guhelli's motivation for writing this topic is related to significant moments in her biography. She is a teacher and a performer holding prestigious

awards. She has performed in Albania and many European countries, and a large part of her performance activity includes solo songs by Albanian composers. The desire to promote the work of native composers inspired her desire to research and write this interesting PhD thesis.

From the beginning, the author tries to clarify essential issues related to the influence of Symbolism on Albanian composers during the communist regime. She proposes that the Symbolists Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé in literature, Gabriel Fauré in music and Victor Cousin in philosophy were influential since they taught French history and literature in Albanian schools at the time.

By examining Symbolism in art music and Symbolism in solo songs, Vita Guhelli is analysing the symbology, the subtle nuances in the verses, and the musical phrases hidden in solo works, which her research aims to discover or rather identify. She acutely cites authors such as Jalal Zeyneli, Edward Hanslick, and Béjar Berisha. It is noteworthy that she analytically discusses and informs about all the significant findings that illuminate this matter. An important contribution is the competent summarisation of this information with her conclusions. No less interesting are the following points, which deal with stylistic discrepancies, Symbolism in Symbology, Symbolism versus realism, Symbolism versus expressionism, and the relationship between text and music in Symbolism.

The author elucidates these critical issues in great detail, which provide us with answers to the aims and objectives of the dissertation. Tracing in depth all the researched topics related to Symbolism, the PhD student outlines clearly its impact on Albanian composers. She brings out important points to continue the presentation of her thesis convincingly and further explores "**Symbolism in solo songs from world music and in Albanian music of the second half of the twentieth century**". The influence on Albanian composers and their music is an important topic. The

geopolitical impact and complex isolationist relations during the communist regime could not help but leave their mark. Vita Guhelli analyses very carefully and delicately provides answers on sensitive topics. I will quote the dissertation, which concludes that **"The first decade of the twentieth century was characterised by traditional musical art inherited over the centuries, interwoven in vocal music and expressed with nuances of symbolic language, but this changed in the momentum of the following years. Professional music came as a revolutionary current precisely during the period of communism in Albania. It manifested itself as a reflection of the emotional intensity characteristic of the contemplative mind of the Albanian artist in his perception of life, of the socio-political circumstances and his inner rebellion that demanded a change of situation"**.

Many composers in these totalitarian conditions overcame monistic pressures. They created their works with bold harmony, chords, chromatic movements, modern colours intertwined with the traditional elements, all interacting aesthetically with the labyrinth of Symbolism.

It is clear from Guhelli's conclusions that it is possible that the symbolist spirit, bypassing ideology and Symbolism as a movement in musical art, was a response to Marxist-Leninist ideology with the so-called doctrine of "socialist realism."

As a performer and teacher, the author's research on some songs by Albanian composers is provoking my interest, focusing on stylistic differences and compositional aspects and the influence of the symbolist spirit, which is the central theme of this thesis. The analyses are thorough, with explicit knowledge of the musical and dramaturgical text. The precise treatment and detail of the specifics of this subject matter are impressive. The applicability of this part of the thesis places it with the importance of a maximum contribution. It shows thoroughness and

professional insight that are particularly valuable. Of significance are the research findings that substantiate the PhD student's conclusion that **"The shape of Symbolism in the solo songs of Albanian composers of a certain period, which includes mainly the years of communism in Albania, has been identified. This result is also due to a detailed study of the semantic language used in the verses of solo songs. The semantic language intertwined with Symbolism in literary art defines the form of the solo song of Albanian composers of the second half of the twentieth century"**.

I accept as credible and practically applicable the contributions she has made in this study.

I am convinced that the professional work with the supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr Ermila Schweitzer.

I express my positive opinion on the contributory nature of the submitted dissertation. I recommend the esteemed scientific jury to award Vita Guhelli the degree of Doctor in the professional field of Music and Dance Art.

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Assoc. Prof. Dr Niklay Motsov