

EXPERT OPINION

for the dissertation thesis of Svetlina Ilieva Angelova-Terzieva entitled
"YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA - WORLD AND NATIONAL PRACTICES AND MODELS"
for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

by

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The thesis by Svetlina Angelova-Terzieva examines youth symphony orchestras with a view to identifying world and national practices and models comparable to the activity of symphony orchestras in the Republic of Bulgaria. This is an "atypical" research topic whose challenges are related to the unsystematic nature of the available data (especially for the global practices). Turning the data into information requires it to be identified, sorted and systematized so as to enable comparative analysis and transfer of international experience as a practical consequence of the action taken. Moreover, the increasing social significance of symphony orchestras and classical music in general in the Republic of Bulgaria as an implicit goal of the work of Svetlina Angelova-Terzieva implies their "inscription" into different in nature, orientation and purpose practices borrowed from outside and adapted after critical analysis of the national context in which the music organizations, and in particular the youth symphony orchestras, operate. The "side-by-side" benefits to the individual and the public of the music business were also not overlooked. In this way, a change of attitude towards musical art in the Republic of Bulgaria is sought, which as a long-term and strategic goal justifies the undertaken research as well as the relevance of the topic in relation to offering a vision and model for the development of youth symphony orchestras and classical music in Republic of Bulgaria.

The thesis of Svetlina Angelova-Terzieva is based on an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, contributions to the research and used literature in Bulgarian and English. The structure of the dissertation contributes to the logical and consistent unfolding of the research and testing of the working hypothesis, and in particular that "orchestral activities are extremely useful for the academic, cognitive, social and emotional growth of young people, and can revitalize, expand and develop the practical creative activities in public music education in Bulgaria, as well as to contribute to the social inclusion and transformation of young people at risk as an element of consistent and a sustainable strategy for social and cultural development" (p. 11).

Usually the introduction presents the relevance and importance of the topic, the object and the subject of the research, the specific goals and tasks set by the dissertation, as well as the methods of research used. In this connection, it should be noted that the subject of the dissertation is the Youth Symphony Orchestras in Bulgaria and around the world, and in particular in England, the USA and Venezuela, considered in their various practices as the subject of research, whose rethinking should help to build a model for promoting amateur music in Bulgaria, thought of as a basis for the development of professional art. In addition, social inclusion through music and the democratization of access to the arts have been considered as key categories that should enhance the cultural participation and social impact of the arts.

The first chapter focuses on the benefits of music, addressing different aspects based on research and systematized in paragraphs. Particular attention is paid to the benefits of musical pursuits on brain

functions, language, mathematical abilities and space-time thinking, as well as the psychological, social and emotional effects achieved. In this respect, it should be noted that the well-argued utility of music for society, and more specifically the emphasis on its social utility, leaves to some extent the impression that it has almost no value in itself other than its service to the public. This is a matter of balance and purpose, which can get better proportions when a dissertation is published.

At the same time, information about various policies, practices and models relevant to the youth orchestras in England and the USA is extremely useful for the wide, but rapidly decreasing, reading audience in Bulgaria. They are presented in Chapter Two. The impressive variety of policies, measures and financial instruments used could also be subject to critical analysis, especially if made in view of their applicability in the socio-economic conditions of the Republic of Bulgaria.

It is obvious that the emphasis in this dissertation, not only in structural but also semantic terms, is placed on Chapter Three. It is dedicated to the Venezuelan System of Children and Youth Orchestras – El Sistema. The dissertation candidate's admiration for this music education program aimed at low-income or disadvantaged young people, pursuing socio-cultural goals (pp. 189 - 209), is clearly visible. El Sistema aims to achieve social inclusion through music, targeting the most disadvantaged members of society – namely underprivileged children. In this respect, this music education program does indeed have innovative potential, which has been studied, adapted and applied in many different countries (pp. 209 - 288).

Crucial to the practical implementation of the ideas presented (for me at least) are the following chapters, which have an applied character. Chapter four deals with music in the school system in the Republic of Bulgaria and carefully examines the possibilities for musical activities, and in particular for instrumental music. This effort is not an end in itself, but is subordinated to the construction of a Conceptual Design of a Model for Development of Youth Symphony Orchestras in the Republic of Bulgaria (pp. 260-377), presented in Chapter Five, which must be institutionally and financially provided by pilot programs (pp. 377 - 395).

The various competences that music forms through the proposed Youth Symphony Orchestra Development Model in the Republic of Bulgaria are impressive, but the question remains about their practical utility for businesses, the market and the economy, especially when employers in the Republic of Bulgaria declare the fluency in the native (Bulgarian) language as priority for them. This is probably why businesses, the market and the economy are lacking in the fields of musicians' professional conversion, limiting the usefulness of music to really, but only, non-profit areas. In them the competences actually formed can be well realized.

The conclusion of the dissertation naturally presents the research results achieved, and the Abstract correctly notes its contributions. It has all the necessary qualities to be successfully defended and put into musical practice.

For these reasons and despite the comments and recommendations made with a view to improving the dissertation, I support the application under consideration and vote in favor of the awarding the educational degree of "Doctor" to Svetlina Ilieva Angelova-Terzieva.

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Sofia

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