

OPINION

For the competition for holding the academic rank of "Professor" in
Music Studies and Music Art
(music culture and education),

Candidate: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rositsa Slavcheva Draganova

From Prof. DSc Christina Yapova

Rositsa Draganova is an established author in Bulgarian music studies, highly valued and respected by her colleagues. She is an undisputed authority in one important field - music education. Her numerous articles and studies, and more recently her impressive monograph in this field, are a scientific foundation to which all those interested in the issue not only turn for bibliographic needs, but with which to get acquainted deeply and in detail, because it can shape their way of thinking, guide them in choosing a method and methodology, offer them ideas that they will trust.

Along with a number of accompanying publications, Rositsa Draganova presents in the competition a major habilitation thesis: the monograph *Music in the Bulgarian School in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century*, published in 2020. This work performs at least two important steps in one: it summarizes what its author has achieved over the years and develops new ideas. As its first contribution, I would like to point out a quality that applies to all of Draganova's research in general: choosing a scientific approach capable of reaching serious results and at the same time opening them up so as to enrich the field of educational practice. And such applicability of the developments, understood in the sense of optimal efficiency, deserves to be singled out as the next, independent contribution of the habilitation work.

Without dwelling exhaustively on the text, I will point out some statements in support of what I have stated. The subject of the work is the music in the Bulgarian school at the time when the foundations of the new Bulgarian culture were being laid in post-liberation Bulgaria. This inevitably creates a context that can be expressed in the following concrete order: Third Bulgarian Kingdom - type of modern culture - educational system - school - music in the school. These units, in turn, are not static cells, but show interaction with each other in a way that clearly goes through another one - the legal basis, normativity. The very fact that the laws on education are in the process of being created, thought out, in accordance with the needs of each of the units, raises all of them and the whole mentioned order at the level of ideas, ways in which they could be put into practice, so as to show their active role in relation to the school, culture, the state. But even this is not yet able to reveal the merits of this work, because

it remains in the realm of concepts describing abstract cultural and social structures. Until the "window" in which personalities are seen opens. This personalized side of the study is as implicit as it is rethought by the author and developed, it suggests that behind the general and the abstract there are always specific faces, voices, hands and minds. There you can also see the hearts - without them the devotion that creates Bulgarian culture for a few years and makes it sound - to sing and play, *to make music* - would not be possible.

The study is written in a serious tone and in a style adequate for a scientific research, without unnecessary pathos. But at the same time it is extremely readable and these two qualities of writing cannot but cause excitement, even admiration when we learn about the fervor of the people, these builders of modern musical Bulgaria, who with an enlightened spirit cultivate the fragile public consciousness in our country, starting from children, adolescent, youth, educating and cultivating the art of music. And if there is a theme in the book in the "parallel minor", it comes from a comparison of the facts that eloquent about the musical rise during the time in question, and those that are no less eloquent, but with the opposite sign, about the state of music in the Bulgarian school today. The wonderful illustrations in the book, which only add fuel to the fire, show the "string orchestra at the Vidin Girls' High School together with its conductor Rusi Kodjamanov" (p. 125), composed of 18 girls with their instruments, rehearsing for the "children's operetta *The Sick Teacher* by Maestro Georgi Atanasov" (p. 132), which is attended by many young participants from the Plovdiv Children's Musical Bouquet, here is the children's choir at the school "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" led by Dimo Boychev (on the cover), for the impressive volume of which today's Bulgarian school cannot even dream of. So, when at the beginning of the first chapter we read the modest laconic summary that "the years before and immediately after the Russo-Turkish War... are characterized by great activity in the field of music education" (pp. 11-12), and the first page of Chapter Three prepares us for the changes that began in 1903, "borderline for the history of Bulgarian music education" (p. 93), when the first "Meeting of teachers of singing and music from secondary complete and incomplete schools in our country" (p. 93), we cannot even imagine what awaits us, what argumentation, accompanied by documents, statutes, laws, disputes and contradictions will build in us the belief in the dynamics and rise of school music education in its first decades. There is no fact or document that we can omit or ignore as insignificant. That is why the passage I will quote can only be exemplary. As such, it is indicative of both the intensity of the information that each fact carries and the conclusions it imposes. The author summarizes the main ideas and the most important decisions prepared by the meeting of music teachers and presented in the special report of the Minister of Education Prof. Ivan Shishmanov: "First, emphasized is the need for a new relationship between practice and theory in education. Second, proposals have been formulated to increase the number of hours in the curriculum of men's and girls' high schools. According to the participants in the congress, for the successful realization of the tasks set in the curricula for this educational degree, a minimum of 2 hours per week of

theory and practice is needed for grades I to IV and 1 hour of choral singing for grades V to VII, and for V grade of girls' high schools - another 2 hours of theory and practice per week..." (pp. 95-96). Other suggestions relate to the timetable of pedagogical schools, to placing the subject of singing on an equal footing with other subjects, something that "would strengthen the compulsory nature of music education" (p. 96), the need for aids and "a harmonious instrument", for the social position of the music teacher, for his educational qualification and specific status, etc. (pp. 96-97).

The title of Chapter Four of the monograph is sustained in the strict discipline of factuality: *Music functionaries from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, connected with the Bulgarian school*. Here we find the names of personalities, behind that - deeds, aspirations and goals in the turmoil of musical construction. It is not possible to point out punctually all the merits of these portraits. It is indisputable that they are extremely valuable for every Bulgarian musicologist, for the music teacher in specialized or general education, for students who have chosen music for their profession, as well as for those who have turned to other specialties, but whose biography is marked by music.

The existence of this chapter in the work is absolutely necessary because of the many benefits it brings. The information available so far about individuals is scarce, often contradictory, and it is difficult to point out exact dating, attribution to the authorship of a piece of music, a textbook, or even a newspaper article. This is the proper place to explicitly point out as Rositsa Draganova's contribution the establishment (or at least the extremely convincing hypothesis) of the name behind the pseudonym A moll (A Minor). That this is Emanuil Manolov has been noticed by several authors, including the parallel in the alliterations of the pseudonyms Bemol (Flat) – Georgi Baidanov and A minor - Emanuil Manolov. Among the other figures who have been given deserved attention are Alexander Krastev, Alois Matsak, Anastas Stoyanov, Angel Bukoreshtliev, Atanas Badev, Vasil Mirchev, Dimitar Radev, Dimitar Hadjigeorgiev, Dimo Boychiv, Dobri Hristov, Karel Mahan, Nikolay Nikolaev, Panajot Pipkov, Rusi Kodjamanov, Yanko Mustakov and others, a total of thirty-two.

The author's contributions are reflected accurately and concisely in the reference attached to the competition documentation, in which they are grouped into three main research areas. In the first place are those related to the field of music education - a field that is not isolated from the other two, but logically intertwined with them. Thus, if the focus of the second area is the genre of lullaby, then attention naturally descend from it, leading to questions of musical creativity, and through them again to educational practice. The lullaby itself is revealed as a focus, gathering in itself community attitudes, educational ideals and musical emanations, capable of building a bridge between old and new, traditional and modern in the Bulgarian ethos and sensitivity. Moreover, Rositsa Draganova manages to fully exploit the possibilities of the genre, examining it in various research sections - from tracing its historical

development and functioning (in the articles "Lullaby in the musical-cultural past"; "Lullaby today", etc.) to placing it at the level of music theory with its basic terminological and methodological issues (see, for example, *The lullaby as a subject of musical terminology*). The third area, also attested to by many publications, is a summary and relates to contemporary problems of education and aesthetics (for example *Ideas of making music, composing and performing practices in the context of the modern development of musicology*). Building on the ideas and results achieved in the other two areas, it also develops them, proving once again the leading place of its author in the study of these current issues.

Evaluating highly the merits of the presented habilitation work, which proves once again the professional qualities of Rositsa Draganova, I recommend that she be elected to the academic position of "Professor".

Prof. DSc Christina Yapova

05/05/2021