

# OPINION

*By Prof. DSc Elisaveta Valchinova-Chendova (IAS-BAS)*

*Prof. direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art*

On the dissertation of

DZANA VIDEVA IVANOVA

On the subject:

**The Italian MUSICA LEGGERA and the Bulgarian Popular Song by the end of the 1980 – Aspects of Influence**

For awarding the educational and academic degree Doctor

Prof. direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art

*Academic advisor: Prof. Dr Rositsa Draganova*

## **BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENT**

Dzana Ivanova is enrolled as a full-time PhD student at the Institute of Art Studies - BAS from 01.01.2020. During her PhD she participated with papers in scientific conferences, has 6 scientific publications (two in print) in publications included in the reference list of NACID, 3 on-line publications in the platform of the Institute of Art Studies and interviews with music specialists (composers Razvigor Popov, Stefan Diomov and Angel Zaberski-son, singers Dimitar Yosifov, Yordanka Hristova, Margarita Khranova, the music editor of the Bulgarian National Radio Zdravko Petrov). She has submitted her dissertation text on time.

## **DISSERTATION EVALUATION**

The dissertation is dedicated to *Musica Leggera* and the influence of Italian music on Bulgarian popular music. The subject has been discussed in texts by musicologists, journalists, cultural and media specialists and others, but has not been the subject of independent research. In this sense the text is innovative and contributes as a musicological study.

As the author stresses, "already in the period between the two world wars, Italian *Musica leggera* emerged as a significant phenomenon in European popular music culture. After the advent of the San Remo Festival in 1951, the sonorousness of this music, whose origins we associate with the beautiful *bel canto* singing, conquered the pop scene in Europe and became popular world wide - a true 'Italian invasion' of the Italian auteur song (canzone d'autore) was observed... Parallel to this, in the 1950s the

new "pop-dance song" (the formulation is by Prof. Rosemary Statelova) appeared on the Bulgarian scene, experiencing the strong influence of the vivid emotional sound of the Italian melodic popular song". The essence of the Italian *Musica Leggera* phenomenon and the situation of Bulgarian pop music in the mid-twentieth century determine the aims and objectives of the work, the approaches used, and the structure of the exposition.

The text is logically and clearly organized in three chapters with subchapters that chronologically trace the two directions of observation towards the phenomenon.

In the first chapter, "*Musica Leggera* and Its Meaning", a successful attempt is made to clarify the term *Musica Leggera* by comparing it with the definitions of popular music, pop music, schlager, that are typical of the second half of the twentieth century, compared with the definitions in Italian. The origins of *Musica Leggera*, the nature of the phenomenon as 'a type of music whose main purpose is to entertain and distract and which is heard in everyday life, such as dance music, lyrical and humorous songs, etc.' and its characteristics such as musical form, rhythm, etc. are examined. The role of the mass media (media) and, of course, the San Remo Festival and the record companies in the promotion and validation of a new vocal style is highlighted.

The second chapter is devoted to the influence of *Musica Leggera* on Bulgarian pop music in the 1950s-1960s in the context of the development of popular music in Bulgaria during these decades. I will especially focus on the subchapter "*Musica Leggera's* Influence on the Repertoire of Bulgarian Pop Performers", which is very important for the research. The author's observations are based on a wide range of existing different kinds of literature as well as on her own observations. In this context, the influence of *Musica Leggera* on performance manner/style and stage behavior is traced.

The third chapter naturally continues with the following decades - "*Musica Leggera's* Influence on Bulgarian Pop in the 1970s - 1980s". In the context of Bulgarian pop music, the central theme is the Golden Orpheus festival and the recitals of foreign performers during the festival, as well as the role of the records produced by Balkanton, with performances of leading solo artists and performing groups influenced by *Musica Leggera*. The observation is substantiated that "following the model of the singers of the 1960s, many of the performers of the 1970s-1980s period also began their creative path with Italian songs, which they sang in the original or with Bulgarian lyrics and arrangements. During their professional careers, however, they now could interpret successful new, Bulgarian original songs, in which perhaps only the melody remains a mark...", formations also appeared. Some major trends in the activities of composers and arrangers related to the influence of *Musica Leggera* are also discussed.

At the end of the dissertation several main conclusions are formulated, which justify the contributions made. The conclusions are logical and are drawn in the direction of *Musica Leggera's* influence on repertoire and performance practice, the creation and shaping of an original musical product, and audience reception. The text convincingly

argues the conclusion that "the importance of *Musica Leggera* for the processes of Bulgarian popular practice remained undisputed until the social changes that occurred at the end of the period under study, which strongly influenced the attitudes of Bulgarian artists, performers and audiences".

The contributions are grouped in several directions.

As I pointed out, this is the first concrete study of the influence of Italian popular culture on Bulgarian popular song. The significance of such a work is that it "broadens our perception of the processes of Bulgarian popular music culture, and in particular reveals particular elements of the uneasy process of affirmation through which our pop song went during the period from the 1950s to the late 1980s".

The main thesis of the work is defended, the idea that the Italian *Musica Leggera* with its characteristic melodic, expressive, and creative identity influenced the development of the Bulgarian pop song.

The following contributions summarize the results in the second and third chapters. The text is predominantly descriptive in tone and overview in nature; the study would benefit from more in-depth reflections on the processes of musical phenomena.

Also important are the scholarly contributions of *Appendix 1* (including collected and systematized information on the Bulgarian cover versions most frequently performed on the Bulgarian pop stage and/or recorded by Bulgarian National Radio and Balkanton during the research period), as well as the author's interviews with Bulgarian music professionals influenced by Italian music, who share their opinions on various aspects of the impact of Italian "light" music on their own repertoire. These interviews can also serve as a basis for future research.

I am familiar with the working process of this dissertation, and I especially congratulate the dissertation supervisor, Prof. Dr. Rositsa Draganova, for achieving this final text.

The abstract fully and correctly summarizes the dissertation thesis.

## CONCLUSION

Considering the topic, the approach to it and the contributions in the realization of the set tasks and goals, **I propose to award Dzana Videva Ivanova for her dissertation work on "The Italian *Musica Leggera* and Bulgarian Popular Song by the End of the 1980s - Aspects of Influence" the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.**

Sofia, 21.04.2023.

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