

# OPINION

On the dissertation on the subject:

THE ITALIAN MUSICA LEGGERA AND THE BULGARIAN POPULAR SONG  
BY THE END OF THE 1980 – ASPECTS OF INFLUENCE

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For awarding the educational and academic degree Doctor in the sphere of higher  
education 8 Arts

Prof. direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art

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Dzana Videva Ivanova received her secondary education at “Vasil Levski” High School in the town of Yambol where she graduated music class (piano). After that she continued her studies at the Technical University, Plovdiv. She completed her studies at the Technical University of Sofia with a master’s degree in Electronics and Automation. In 2005 defended her master thesis on the Scandinavian socio-cultural model in the specialty "Nordic Studies" (with Swedish language) at the FCNP, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. She teaches at the John Atanasoff School of Education. Has published in scientific collections and periodicals on issues related to European culture and music. Ivanova participates in Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus+ projects with partners from Germany and Sweden. From 2020 she has been a full-time PhD student at the Institute of Art Studies - BAS.

Dzana Ivanova's diverse interests and experience lead her to develop a topical theme in her dissertation. The subject of the dissertation is new and provides a basis for important observations and conclusions about interactions and general trends in the development of entertainment culture and music. The research makes use of substantial new material gathered in the process of working on the dissertation. The PhD student has met the minimum national science metrics requirements.

The dissertation consists of 260 pages. 143 of them are the main text. It is structured in an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The bibliography includes 125 sources in Cyrillic and Latin. Nine appendices are made to the basic text. They supplement the study with specialized opinions of established Bulgarian musicians related to pop music.

The introduction presents the subject, aims and objectives of the study. The doctoral candidate focuses on the novelty and relevance of the dissertation topic - a comprehensive study of Italian popular music and its influence in Bulgaria from the 1950s to the 1980s. The main research methodology is justified, which enables periodization and music-historiographic observations, systematization and analysis of the repertoire, interpretation of cultural-musical phenomena.

Chapter One discusses the “Musica Leggera and its significance”. It introduces the term Musica Leggera and the nature of the specific Italian practice of the popular in music and the influences it emanates. It traces trends in entertainment culture from the nineteenth century to the period under study. The specific characteristics of this music are elucidated: pleasant and lively, easy to remember melody, simple and clear structure, simple rhythm, and accompaniment. The important role of the media in its circulation and dissemination is presented. The doctoral student presents the emerging “standard of melodiousness”, typical of mass culture, as its essential characteristic. A special place is given to the San Remo festival and its social position, the role of record companies and their strategies. Important are the conclusions and generalizations about melodic songs, but also about the new practice and triumph of “shouters”/urlatori.

The second chapter deals with "Influence of Musica Leggera on the Bulgarian popular music in the 1950s - 1960s". It presents the characteristics of the term "pop music", the aesthetic and social functions of the phenomenon they signify. It traces the impact of the authors and disseminators of its musical products. The strong influence of Musica Leggera and the transformation of the Bulgarian pop song are analyzed in the new historical period of the development of entertainment music in Bulgaria. The contribution of composers such as Dimitar Yosifov and rising star performers Maria Koseva, Emil Dimitrov, Lili Ivanova, Georgi Kordov, and Pasha Hristova is explored. Their performance style and stage behavior are examined. The institutions involved in the production, circulation and dissemination of pop music are presented - BNR, BNT, “Balkanton”, etc. A valuable conclusion is the noticeable initial Italian influences, its gradual overcoming, and the creation of Bulgarian musical products with its own image.

The third chapter is titled “Influence of Musica Leggera on the Bulgarian popular music in the 1970s - 1980s”. This part of the dissertation traces the direct contact with Italian performers in Bulgaria through the Golden Orpheus festival, as well as the standard of artistry adopted by them. The important role of the music produced by the record company “Balkanton”, influenced by Musica Leggera, is examined. The views and evaluations of Bulgarian pop music in this period by leading Bulgarian practitioners and musicologists are presented. The development of Bulgarian soloists and performing groups influenced by Musica Leggera is observed. Among them are Yordanka Hristova, Margarita Hranova, Donika Venkova, Orlin Goranov, Kristina Dimitrova, Tram No. 5, and Tonika. The contributions of composers, arrangers, conductors, sound engineers and other participants in the process of creating pop music are mentioned. It is concluded that the cultural phenomena in Bulgarian

popular music of the period under study gradually reached a higher quality and that many original songs were not inferior to Italian models.

The conclusion summarizes important findings. The thesis abstract accurately reflects the research results achieved. There are 6 publications on the dissertation topic - they represent an essential part of the research.

The contributions of the thesis are in several directions. Dzana Ivanova's dissertation is the first comprehensive scientific study in Bulgaria to present *Musica Leggera* and its influence on Bulgarian pop music. The analyses and comparisons help to better understand the processes in Bulgarian popular music. The specificities of Italian popular music are shown in comparison with similar phenomena. In this way, one can better understand the significance of *Musica Leggera* and its impact on the patterning of other musical cultures. Italian influences on repertoire, stage behavior and performance style in the Bulgarian context are pointed out, as well as models for the creation of Italian-style music and its development. An important contribution is the collected and systematized data on 144 cover versions of Italian songs performed by Bulgarian singers. These, together with indicated recordings made by Balkanton, are presented in the appendices, and can serve as a basis for further research. The doctoral student's interviews with Bulgarian music specialists (also placed in appendices), who were influenced by the Italian *Musica Leggera*, are also contributory. Through their professional opinions some of the research conclusions reached are supported. The thesis in the dissertation on the influence of Italian popular music on the formation of the Bulgarian pop song and its transformation into a distinctive authorial product with a Bulgarian sound is successfully defended.

The topic of the dissertation is new and important for Bulgarian musicology. The presented results are valuable and may serve as a starting point for further research. I support the scientific contributions formulated by the PhD student. The dissertation text meets the requirements of the LDASRB and the RILDASRB and the minimum national scientific requirements. Therefore, I confidently propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Dzana Videva Ivanova the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in the professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

Sofia, 20 April 2023

Prof. Dr. Ivanka Vlaeva