

OPINION

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On the dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree of
Doctor

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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1. Relevance of the study

It is beyond doubt to any person well acquainted with the problematics and ordinary listener that the enormous impact of the Italian **pop/schlager/pop/light music** on our own music since the beginning 1950s. Borrowing and imitation combined with the originality of Bulgarian artists have long been part of the native "classics" in these essentially identical genres in terms of musical content, stylistic characteristics and repertoire, performance manner and interpretative techniques, arrangements, vocal and vocal-instrumental ensembles, lyrics, clothing, hairstyles, stage behavior, etc. There are **studies and articles in our music studies devoted to moments in these issues**, but the title of the work presented for the **award of a PhD degree** points us towards a greater ambition in the thematic scope of the study, which combines historiographical and applied approaches.

The **subject is topical, the dissertation is accessible, and the text has contributive value**. The review of development over time of this genre is placed in a broad musicological context to show that Musica Leggera has its deep historical and geographical aspect. The PhD student has generally succeeded in defining specific tasks, the performance of which leads to the achievement of objectives such as **making a successful attempt to define it functionally, as content and at a conceptual level**. The dissertation is topical because the interest in this music is not waning, while at the same time the scientific, historical, theoretical and performance issues of this art are poorly illuminated. **In this sense, the following new points can be highlighted in the present study** in historiographical and theoretical aspects.

2. Knowledge of the problematics. Structure of the work, scope, and quality of the study. Abstract.

The doctoral student is **well acquainted** with the problems addressed in the dissertation. On the one hand, this is evident in the text from the thorough historical overview and analysis with a study of the chronological development and spread of the genre, on the other her knowledge of music performance and production of recordings, festivals, and compositions in the field of *Musica Leggera*. This allows her to write in a professional language and draw relevant conclusions based on the material collected and described in the text. The volume of sources used is relatively large.

This can be seen by the quantitative characteristics of the dissertation - **it has 267 pages in total, of which 143 pages of main text (preface, three chapters and conclusion), and the rest are appendices and a bibliography including 99 titles in Cyrillic and 26 titles in Latin (in two languages - Italian and English). There are 384 footnotes and explanations, of which 376 are in the main text** (some of them with unusually large length, e.g., entire composer biographies).

Chapter One introduces the origins and nature of *Musica Leggera*, the role of the festival in San Remo and the record companies, and the social context in the late 1950s and 1960s.

Chapter Two traces the influence of *Musica Leggera* on Bulgarian pop music during 1950s and 1960s, beginning with the development of pop music in Bulgaria. This is followed by the influence of *Musica Leggera* on the repertoire of Bulgarian pop performers and on their performance style and stage behavior.

The third chapter examines the evolution of these influences in the 1970s and 1980s, Italian performers with recitals at the Golden Orpheus, the Balkanton-produced *Musica Leggera*-influenced production, solo performers, and performance formations, influenced by it, and major trends in the work of composers and arrangers associated with the *Musica Leggera* influence. Curious and credible are the examples of state support of popular music in the period under review and its importance.

The Conclusion draws findings about the thesis and the contributions that have led to new research points.

The first two appendices, the result of the author's collecting and research work, are extremely valuable. **Appendix 1 is a list of Bulgarian cover versions of Italian songs in the period 1950s - late 1980s.** Appendix 2 is a table of gramophone records issued by the record company "Balkanton" where Italian songs were recorded in the original and in Bulgarian language. The next annexes present the opinions of musicians (in privately conducted interviews by the doctoral student specifically for the dissertation), on various aspects of the impact of Italian "light" music in our country: **the composers Razvigor Popov and Stefan Diomov, the singers Dimitar Yosifov, Yordanka Hristova, Margarita Khranova, the music editor of the Bulgarian National Radio Zdravko Petrov, as well as the composer Angel Zaberski Jr.**

The **abstract** is well organized and reflects the scientific field of application in its entirety, the aims, objectives, research of the topic and contributions in a sufficiently concise, yet informative format.

3. Description and evaluation of the contributions of the thesis.

The above research work has provided the graduate with material for comparative analysis as well as a basis for interpretation with its own conclusions. **As the main contribution of the research, I would point out that it is the first more complex study in Bulgaria on the importance of Musica Leggera for the development of Bulgarian popular music.** The main tasks have been fulfilled - the evolution of Italian light music has been traced, its specificity has been presented, its influence and importance in our country has been described.

A study covering important moments in the development of entertainment music in the period under study has been made. The **contributions** mentioned in the Conclusion are real and open the door to future development of the topic. The contributions of the work can be summarized in several main directions:

1. As the first voluminous scientific research on this topic, the study and systematization of the impact on our popular music of emblematic examples of Italian musical scene, it helps us to broaden our ideas about the processes in the Bulgarian popular music culture and reveals important elements of the original processes of its consolidation and establishment to its heyday at the end of the twentieth-century period under review.
2. The specificity of *Musica Leggera* in comparison with other terms in pop music has been clarified. The origin, historical evolution, and factors of dissemination, thanks to which we can understand and conceptualize in depth the significance and impact of the phenomenon on the musical culture of different countries, together with the definition of the *Musica Leggera* phenomenon. They are introduced as essential sources, current scientific texts, and encyclopedias of leading Italian musical researchers, which have not been used in our musicology so far.
3. Chronologically and in periods by decades, the processes of penetration of and adoption of Italian musical trends in popular music in our country have been examined. The specifics of their impact on the repertoire, the stage behavior, and interpretative qualities of our famous performers have been analyzed. Commented is the mechanism of creating the arrangements of Bulgarian pop songs influenced by Italian melodies. The dynamics of creation in the 70s and 80s of performance formations based on the Italian model has been traced.

4. Recommendation

This valuable text can only be the beginning of a broader study of the so important Italian influence on Bulgarian pop music. **There is a large body of purely musicological tasks that this more historic-collective work touches tangentially but forms a basis for building on.** In this sense, my recommendation is on the one hand that it be developed and enriched as a book by the author herself (perhaps in

collaboration with other young researchers), and on the other to popularize larger or smaller parts of it as educational or popular reading for professionals and music lovers.

5. In conclusion:

The work under consideration shows the research competence on the part of PhD student, the text meets the requirements for a dissertation, has contributive character and some of its contributions could have a practical and applied character.

In view of the above, I believe the submitted dissertation provides grounds to propose to the distinguished scientific jury to award the educational and academic degree of **Doctor to Dzana Ivanova.**

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