

REVIEW

By Prof. DSc Ventsislav Dimov

**On the dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree of
D o c t o r, professional direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art (initiated procedure
by the Institute of Art Studies, BAS)**

By Dzana Videva Ivanova

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

Academic advisor: Prof. Dr Rositsa Draganova

1. About the PhD student

I have known Dzana Ivanova since her enrolment as a full-time PhD student in the Music Department of the Institute of Art Studies, BAS (2020). From the presented CV, it becomes clear that she has diverse interests and educational qualifications (music school - piano; completed secondary education in a music class of a specialized high school; educational qualification degree "Bachelor" and "Master" - Technical University, Sofia; "Master" - FCNP of Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”). During her studies as a full-time PhD student at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS (01.01.2020 - 01.01.2023, when she was discharged with the right to defense) she actively participated in the academic activities of the Institute. I've also noticed some of her scholarly and applied activities (as a contributor to the IAS-BAS Art Platform, etc.). The materials proposed by the doctoral student meet the minimum national requirements set forth in the ADASRB and exceed those in the NACID tables.

2. Introduction of the work: general characteristics

The peer-reviewed dissertation : “The Italian MUSICA LEGGERA and the Bulgarian Popular Song by the end of the 1980 – Aspects of Influence” by Dzana Videva Ivanova consists of 260 pages, of which the main text of the dissertation - 143 pages, appendices (interviews) and sources - 117 pages (bibliography of 79 titles in Cyrillic and 19 in Latin, as well as archival and electronic sources - a total of 37 items). The abstract is 40 pages long.

The text of the dissertation has the following structure: an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The introduction explains the reasons for the choice of the topic and its importance and relevance, the object and subject of the research, the scientific aims and objectives, the choice of methodology and the structure of the development. I will note the ambitious task of choosing a phenomenon that comes from outside,

"from the West", but unfolds during the decades of the "closed society" of state socialism (from the 1950s to the 1980s) in Bulgaria. Among the author's aims is to describe an understudied subject (Italian influences on Bulgarian pop), but also to analyze the reasons for such influence through the views of cultural actors: "music lovers and professional musicians".

The first chapter, entitled "Musica Leggera and its Meaning", introduces the topic by combining terminological clarifications, supported by basic bibliographical references, with conclusions about cultural influence and its agents. The parts: "The Term Musica Leggera and Related Terms," "Musica Leggera - Origins, Essence, Media Coverage," "The Role of the San Remo Festival and the Record Companies," and "The Success of the Italian Urlatori - Symbol of Youth Emancipation and Economic Growth in the Late 1950s-Early 1960s" offer a tightly diachronic description of the subject, which concludes in the final chapter with the implication that Musica Leggera became part of the global music and media industry as early as the 1960s. and its 'universality', 'mass media importance' and 'recognizability' speak to its global cultural role.

Chapters two and three of the dissertation trace the influence of Musica Leggera on Bulgarian pop music during two distinct periods in the second half of the twentieth century. The abundance of information, chronologically arranged, and analyses in these chapters make these two chapters basic for the dissertation. Chapter Two, "Musica Leggera's Influence on Bulgarian Pop in the 1950s-1960s", includes an overview of the development of pop music in Bulgaria; interpretations of Musica Leggera's influence on the repertoire of Bulgarian pop performers; on performance manner/style and stage behavior; and how this music was situated in the "newly established state institutions". The third chapter, entitled "Musica Leggera's Influence on Bulgarian Pop in the 1970s-1980s", includes sections on Italian performers with recitals at the Golden Orpheus; the role of the Balkanton's production the influence of Italian music; performers and formations influenced by Musica Leggera during the period (Yordanka Hristova, Margarita Hranova, Orlin Goranov, Tonika, Tram No. 5, etc.).); some manifestations and tendencies of this influence in the activity of composers and arrangers (Alexander Brazitsov, Razvigor Popov, Stefan Diomov, etc.). An important part of this chapter is the attempt to project the processes and figures of Italian popular music onto the wider screen of views on pop music in the 1970s and 1980s.

The conclusion summarizes the conclusions proposed after each chapter and responds to the research key ideas and perspectives (thesis, aims and objectives, etc.) set out in the introduction. Among the most important points made by the author are the aspects of Italian influence highlighted: influence on repertoire and performance practice (dynamics of performance formations) and interpretation (singing style, performance manner, stage behavior); influence on the creation and shaping of an original musical product (e.g. some characteristics of the song - melodic and harmonic features, rhythm, arrangement); influence on the reception of the audience (the role of the

international festival "Golden Orpheus" and its media reflection, the record company "Balkanton").

The abstract correctly presents the essence of the dissertation, outlines the contributions of the work, and informs about the publications of the doctoral student on the topic of the dissertation (six publications in scientific periodicals and collections in the period 2021-2023).

3. Contributions and significance of the dissertation work

The self-report on the contributions of the dissertation : “The Italian MUSICA LEGGERA and the Bulgarian Popular Song by the end of the 1980 – Aspects of Influence”, included by Dzana Ivanova in the conclusion of the dissertation and in the abstract, outlines the main contributions of the work in six directions: 1). First systematic scientific study of the influence of Italian popular culture on Bulgarian pop song; 2). The first chapter on the specificity of Musica Leggera introduces Italian studies unknown in Bulgarian literature; 3). Periodization of Italian influence on Bulgarian pop music and artists; 4). Interviews with participants in the processes made for the purpose of the work; 5). A thesis on the dynamics of Musica Leggera influence - at first an "aesthetic and performance model" to emulate, later a creative reworking and combining, resulting in "an original Bulgarian sound in which only the melodicism remains a mark of the Italian song tradition"; 6). Scientific and informative value: search and description of Bulgarian cover versions, presented as a table with 144 titles of Italian melodies and their Bulgarian variants in Appendix 1.

I accept the six directions proposed by the doctoral student, which outline the contributions of the work, with the proviso that they could be rearranged and typologized: scientific contributions related to the choice of the topic and new information proposed by the author (factual material); scientific contributions related to a new interpretation of the selected and systematized material: scientific and applied aspects. As a summary of these three general directions of the six contributions highlighted, the following merits of the dissertation can be pointed out. The work has both musicological and cultural value; it is informative and innovative; it contains data that have been researched by the author and in most cases presented for the first time; this information is structured in a way that shows skills in diachronic, typological, and systematic thinking. The author is competent and knowledgeable, familiar with the phenomenon under study and its scientific interpretations by Bulgarian and Italian authors. The conclusions are well argued, introducing an internal periodization of the phenomenon related to historical, socio-cultural, aesthetic aspects.

4. Notes and recommendations

Dzana Ivanova's dissertation offers a wealth of information, which, with the author's systematization, unfolds analytical potential. Prospects for future publication of the text as a monograph motivate some remarks and recommendations. The undoubted informative (the author defines it as scientifically applied) value of the appendices in three arrays (list of Bulgarian cover versions of Italian songs in the period 1950s -

late 1980s; gramophone records issued by the record company “Balkanton”, on which Italian songs were recorded in the original and in Bulgarian; the seven interviews with singers, composers, radio editors), would acquire a higher analytical significance if they were more densely interpreted and more organically included in the research. This would be possible with the application of up-to-date and interdisciplinary (in addition to historical-musicological, ethnographic, cultural, anthropological, media representations, etc.) tools and approaches. In the text and in the appendices, there is information on the functioning of the Italian Wave concert scene and its audiences; on the Golden Orpheus festival scene as a cultural industry; on the media contexts of the state-owned radio, television, and company “Balkanton” and their audiences... This wealth of information would acquire a higher scholarly potential when it is not merely described as a set of data, names, years, etc., but read in the dynamics of cultural circuits, possible keys to illuminate Bulgarian popular music in the recent past and its revitalizations today with their inherent economic, political, ideological, power, etc. aspects. I wish the author to continue the path of scholarly challenges, which will mean not stopping learning, to develop her work, to share it with the colleagues also as a published book.

5. Conclusion

The dissertation “The Italian MUSICA LEGGERA and the Bulgarian Popular Song by the end of the 1980 – Aspects of Influence” by Dzana Videva Ivanova is a contribution according to the indicators of scientific activity: it problematizes a serious topic, introduces unknown information, further develops, and enriches the existing knowledge in Bulgarian science. I would especially like to mention the importance of the chosen topic and the approaches to its study as part of the perspectives for the study of popular and media music, which are among the priorities of the scientific board of the Music Department at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The thesis fully meets the requirements of the LDASRB and the regulations for its application for the awarding of PhD degree. My assessment is positive, I vote with conviction for the awarding of the PhD degree to Dzana Ivanova in the professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art. I hope that my colleagues on the scientific jury share this opinion.

19. 04. 2023 г.

Reviewer:

(Prof. DSc Ventsislav Dimov)