

STATEMENT

by **Prof. Dr. Vesela Ivanova Geleva**, Lecturer in Choral Conducting at the Department of Music Pedagogy and Conducting of the Faculty of Music Pedagogy at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof. Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv

for **Yuliyán Agop Odazhiyan**, candidate for the degree Doctor of Education in the following field of higher education: 2. Human sciences, Academic major: 2.4. Religion and Theology, Doctoral program: Medicine, psychology, and faith at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, Department of Theology of Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski.

Yulian Odazhiyan was born in 1978. He graduated from Academy of Music, Dance and Fine arts "Prof. Assen Diamandiev" in Plovdiv, where he obtained a Bachelor's degree in Music Pedagogy and a Master's degree in Conducting. He completed his qualification skills at St. Kliment Ohridski", where he obtained a Master's degree in Theology and History. He worked as a teacher of music, folklore, history and ecclesiastical music, as well as as a conductor in a number of specialized schools: Secondary school "Lyuben Karavelov" in Plovdiv, Secondary Music School - Shiroka Luka, Plovdiv Theological Seminary "Sts. Cyril and Methodius". He is currently the principal of the Hristo Smirnenski Primary School in the town of Plovdiv. He is also a lecturer in the disciplines of Eastern Ecclesiastical Singing, Choir and Worship and Typikon at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". Yuliyán Odazhiyan actively participates in a number of national programs of the Ministry of Education and Science and international projects with European funding. He has active publishing and performing activities.

The materials submitted in the procedure are comprehensive in quantity and meaningful in quality. The applicant exceeds the required number of publications - 5 in lieu of 3, as well as the minimum number of points required by National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID). The dissertation and dissertation abstract meet the required standard.

Yuliyán Odazhiyan's research is on the topic "**Liturgical and Musicological Aspects of the Great Doxology in the Slavic Manuscripts of the Rila Choir School**". The total content of the thesis is 256 pages: an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, scientific contributions, appendices and a bibliography including 154 titles in Bulgarian, Russian, English, German, French, Greek, Latin, as well as Internet sources. The doctoral student is motivated by his personal pedagogical practice and experience, as well as his performance activity as a conductor and kliros singer. The research undertaken is relevant in nature and will contribute to academic study, as well be useful to a wide range of musicologists, theologians, conductors, psalters, choristers and lovers of the orthodox chant music tradition.

The introduction presents numerous and interesting historiographical sources on the topic, as well as the object, subject, purpose, and goals of the study, which include: to study and analyze the literary sources on the subject; to analyze the liturgical features of the Great Doxology; to trace and analyze the importance and role of the Rila choir school in the 19th century, and of the manuscripts concerning the Great Doxology; to carry out a detailed musicological and thematic analysis of the Great Doxology of hieromonk Neofit of Rila. The chosen interdisciplinary approach is significant and implies fluent handling of different types of theoretical terminology from several distinct scientific fields: theological, musicological,

hymnographic, historical, etc. The PhD student focuses on the use of exegetical and historical-critical methods of research, diachronic analysis, philological approach, etc., through which he achieves the set goals.

Chapter One discusses the liturgical aspects of the Great Doxology, the genesis of the text, its genre, its dogmatic significance, and its liturgical use as a hymnographic Trinitarian artifact of praise. Of particular interest is the comparison made with other Christian traditions - Old Believers, Roman Catholic Church, Copts, etc. In the generalizations made at the end of the chapter, the dissertation reaches a number of significant conclusions about the content and significance of the Great Doxology, as one of the most ancient genres in Christian Orthodox hymnography. He points out that the Great Doxology is a compilation of various texts and has undergone an evolution, with earlier versions being shorter and later ones including additional elements that reflect the needs of the liturgy, but in an overall sense is intended to express heavenly glorification through earthly worship. The combination of dogmatic content, educational focus, and aesthetic value through which the genre of doxology acquires important liturgical significance is emphasized.

The subject of **the second chapter** is the Slavonic musical manuscripts in the Rila Monastery. The doctoral student highlights the importance of the Rila Monastery as a religious, spiritual, educational and cultural centre and, in particular, the role of the Rila School of Church Singing and Hymnography in the preservation, consolidation, renewal and development of the Orthodox musical tradition. After reviewing the available manuscripts and analyzing them, Odazhiyan draws conclusions about the specific contributions of the Rila scholars to the genre of hymnody, including the 11 examples of this genre written by them. The number of sources he has studied is impressive, which adds depth and stability to the scholarly argument. The language of the exposition is logical, the terminology is correctly used, as are the sources cited.

The main contribution of the dissertation is found in **Chapter Three**, which includes a musicological and thematic analysis of five Great Doxologies by hieromonk Neofit of Rila - Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 from manuscript No. 115 of the Rila Monastery and its corresponding 2015 printed edition. As a consequence of the extensive and thorough multi-layered analysis, the doctoral student reaches conclusions of scientific value, which concern the melodic language and the idiosyncrasies of musical expression, the verse form and its spaciousness, the aesthetic expression and the fullness of emotional impact, the grandeur and doxological character of the hymn according to the Byzantine ecclesiastical tradition, the simplicity and genuineness of expression, etc.

Among the contributions of the thesis the following should be highlighted:

- The dissertation is the first study of its kind on the Great Doxology in the Orthodox liturgical tradition, which consistently leads to new theoretical and research horizons to be discovered and explored.
- For the first time, scholarly findings and conclusions related to the the Great Doxology in the activity of the Rila school are made.

- In the study and theoretical analysis of the sources, nature and specificity of the liturgical and musicological features of the Great Doxology, data related to significant phenomena for liturgical theology and church music are brought out. The detailed musicological and thematic analysis of such a large number of Great Doxologies (5 in different echos, i.e. modes of the oktoechos) is also a contribution to the study of the genre's problematics.
- In the analysis of the Slavonic manuscripts and in the context of theoretical studies, the significant specific features of style and compositional technique of hieromonk Neofit of Rila have been revealed, formulated and brought to light.

All this emphasizes the need for the work to be published and used by students, teachers, theologians, musicologists, seminarians, conductors, singers and enlightened listeners.

In conclusion, I know the PhD student Yuliyana Odazhiyan from his studies at Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof. Asen Diamandiev" as a motivated, inquiring and inquisitive and capable person with diverse interests and multi-directional successful professional fulfillment. With the present scientific work he proves a serious interest in the field of theology and ecclesiastical music, supported by teaching activity, accumulated methodological knowledge, performing experience and desire for future improvement. Taking into account the above, I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Y. Odazhiyan the degree Doctor of Education in the field of higher education 2. Human sciences, Academic major: 2.4. Religion and Theology, Doctoral program: Medicine, psychology, and faith at Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski and I wish him new successes and fulfilled goals in the field of pedagogy, performance and music theory.

10.01.2025

prof. PhD Vesela Geleva