

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Ilieva Dimitrova

Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin of Preslav", DQPDPS, Varna

Field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences

Professional field: 1.3. Pedagogy of Education in...

Doctoral Program: Methodology of Music Education

PhD Candidate: Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva

**Dissertation Topic: Innovative pedagogical technologies for developing vocal skills
in high school students**

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tanya Viktorova Burdeva

Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

Faculty of Pedagogy

Department of Music

1. General description of the submitted materials

By order № RD-22-608 dated on 28.02.2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to provide a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic: „Innovative pedagogical technologies for developing vocal skills in high school students” for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 1. Educational Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of..., doctoral program Methodology of Music Education. The author of the dissertation work is Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva - PhD student in full-time studies at the Department of Music with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tanya Burdeva from Paisii Hilendarski Plovdiv University. The report is RD-21-497/27.02.2025, submitted by Prof. Dr. Vladimira Stefanova Angelova – Dean of the Faculty of Education, and in accordance with Art. 4 of the ZRASRB, Art. 2 (2), Art. 30 (3) of the PPZRASRB, and Art. 37 (1) of the PRASPU.

The set of materials submitted on electronic media by Milena Angelova Kostova–Garbacheva is in accordance with Article 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU and includes the following documents:

- Application addressed to the Rector of Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski for the initiation of a procedure for the defense of a doctoral dissertation;

- Statement by the academic supervisor Prof. Dr. Tanya Viktorova Burdeva, approving admission to the preliminary discussion of the dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor";

- Minutes No. 8 dated 18.02.2025 from the extended departmental council of the Department of Music, concerning the report on readiness to initiate the procedure and the preliminary discussion of the doctoral dissertation;
- Curriculum vitae in European format;
- Doctoral dissertation;
- Abstract (author's summary);
- List of scientific publications related to the dissertation topic;
- Copies of the scientific publications;
- Declaration of originality and authenticity of the submitted documents;
- Compliance report with the minimum national requirements for the candidate's scientific and teaching activities for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor".

2. Brief biographical information about the PhD candidate

The biography of the doctoral candidate Milena Angelova Kostova–Garbacheva presents the image of a highly capable and innovative music educator, as well as a vocal coach. She is diligent, responsible, and goal-oriented. She possesses strong writing skills and the ability to conduct scientific research. Other prominent qualities include adaptability and resilience in overcoming challenges. Her work is focused on a specific issue in the methodology of music education - namely, the implementation of innovative pedagogical technologies in the vocal training of high school students in the Bulgarian secondary education system, both in group and individual formats, and their integration into established vocal pedagogical practices.

The candidate was born in 1984 in the town of Assenovgrad, where she completed her secondary education at "St. St. Prince Boris I" Secondary School. In 2013, she graduated from New Bulgarian University with a qualification in Performing Arts – Pop and Jazz Singer. In 2018, she earned a Master's degree in Music Pedagogy from Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“, with a teaching qualification for music education pre-schools and general secondary schools.

From 2015 to 2021, Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva worked as a performing musician and performer, and concert artist at “MARINOART” Ltd. Between 2021 and 2023, she was a music teacher at "Ivan Vazov" Language High School, and during 2024 - 2025 she works as a vocal coach for children of various ages at the private eco-school "Sun Ray" in Plovdiv. Since 2019, she has been the owner and manager, musician, vocal coach, performing artist, event host, and organizer of educational, cultural, and musical initiatives at private music center Studio Michelle Ltd.

In her pedagogical practice, Milena Angelova Kostova–Garbacheva has also distinguished herself as a teacher applying the Montessori method, including work with children with special educational needs. Her social skills and competences are highly developed—she is communicative and capable of effective teamwork. She has extensive experience in creative collaboration in the fields of music, culture, and education.

She possesses leadership and organizational skills in project and team management, including flexibility, adaptability, and efficiency in work processes such as planning, administration, coordination, and action control. She independently or collaboratively organizes and carries out music and creative activities as a performing musician and singer both in Bulgaria and abroad. She actively participates in professional courses and seminars in a similar capacity.

Milena demonstrates excellent computer literacy, including proficiency in basic hardware and software, office applications, online platforms, and various operating systems. She is also highly skilled in working with specialized music equipment and software for recording and sound

modeling. Additionally, she has extensive experience with photo and video equipment, graphic design, editing, and processing of photo and video materials using specialized software.

Milena Angelova Kostova–Garbacheva has many years of experience as a pop and jazz performer both in Bulgaria and internationally. She is the author of lyrics for her own and others' songs and has rich stage experience as a singer, musician, and performer at various types of events. She is the recipient of numerous awards from competitions and honors as both a performer and vocal coach from various music forums. She also serves as a jury member and trainer at vocal music competitions throughout the country.

3. Relevance of the research topic

Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva has chosen a key topic in the field of music education for her doctoral dissertation, one that addresses a significant research issue: the implementation of innovative pedagogical technologies in vocal training - both group and individual - and their integration into established vocal pedagogical practices. This topic holds considerable importance for the enhancement of music education for high school students in the Bulgarian secondary school system.

4. Information about the doctoral studies, dissertation, Abstract, and publications

Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva is a PhD candidate at Paisii Hilendarski Plovdiv University, Faculty of Education, Department of Music. Her dissertation complies with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for its Implementation (PPZRASRB), and the relevant internal regulations of Paisii Hilendarski Plovdiv University. There is no information indicating any procedural violations.

The dissertation consists of Introduction, three chapters, Conclusions and Contributions, Appendices, Used Literature - all 193 pages, 160 – main text and 33 – Appendices. It includes 12 tables, 24 figures (graphics and pictures), 21 diagrams and 10 music examples. In Appendices are included additionally 26 figures and 15 music examples. The list of the used literature consists of 96 sources, 27 Bulgarian and 69 foreign, in Latin script.

The author addresses a specific and timely issue in the field of music education methodology at the secondary school level. She convincingly argues for the relevance of the topic—the necessity of developing and applying innovative pedagogical technologies that can update and enrich the existing classical methods and techniques used in vocal training during the upper-secondary stage (ages 13–19). This need serves as a well-grounded justification for the development of the dissertation, which I fully support.

Already in the Introduction, a positive impression is made by the competent formulation of the methodological framework of the research: subject, object, aim, the resulting research tasks, methods, and working hypothesis. These are entirely consistent with the requirements of educational research methodology.

In Chapter One, a systematization and in-depth analysis of theoretical information from specialized literature is provided on the topic under examination - namely, the application of innovative pedagogical technologies for the development of vocal skills in students at the upper-secondary level. Furthermore, the conclusions reached by Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva in this chapter are logically structured and clearly articulated.

In Chapter Two of the dissertation, the author thoroughly examines the structure of the vocal apparatus, as well as the challenges faced in vocal pedagogical work with beginners and

intermediate-level singers at the high school stage. Special attention is given to vocal habits such as improper singing posture, breathing and support, inaccurate intonation, issues with vocal diction and articulation, unbalanced registers, and poor sound production when singing transitional tones. The author also addresses the mutation of the voice in both sexes, psychological challenges such as emotional instability, excessive anxiety, and stage fright, as well as lack of motivation, selection of unsuitable repertoire, diagnosis, and the development of an innovative audio-visual profile for the student, which includes criteria and norms for evaluating vocal development. In this context, the doctoral candidate appropriately offers specific musical examples for vocal-technical exercises, as well as innovative pedagogical technologies for addressing the problems outlined. The author also provides an in-depth analysis of computer programs, mobile applications, and digital devices that assist contemporary vocal educators. The use of mobile applications for independent vocal tasks is described, with the author skillfully emphasizing their qualities. When used correctly and for their intended purpose, these tools "can serve as an adaptive tool for personalized learning based on each student's needs" (Dissertation, p. 90).

In Chapter Three, the organization and execution of the pedagogical study are presented. The criteria and indicators for the research are competently formulated, and appropriate methods are applied to test the hypothesis and achieve the set objectives, namely: pedagogical observation, analysis of theoretical, visual, and auditory information, comparison, generalization, and pedagogical experimentation. The experiment's setup is logically sound, with both experimental and control groups involved. The study is convincingly presented, and the analysis of the results is evidentiary, confirming the validity of the working hypothesis. The conclusions reached by Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva are logically ordered and clearly articulated. The author convincingly highlights the strengths of the proposed innovative model, providing both its theoretical justification and practical applicability.

The Conclusion of Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva's dissertation is a logical summary of the entire work. It reflects a coherent structure, excellent command of scientific terminology, and adherence to the standards for formatting a doctoral dissertation.

The literature used by the author includes works by music theorists and educators, as well as their quotes, which support the core arguments of the research. I believe that the dissertation of Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva, with its carefully selected literary sources, is precise and professional, demonstrating a profound and extensive knowledge of the academic field in which she works.

The dissertation is the original work of the author.

The Abstract presents a summary of the dissertation. It covers all chapters of the dissertation and correctly outlines the main research results achieved by the author. It includes ideas and conclusions, a list of scientific and applied scientific contributions, as well as the practical applicability of the results obtained. A list of scientific publications related to the dissertation's topic is also provided.

The three scientific publications listed reflect significant aspects of the content of the dissertation without duplicating it. They undoubtedly possess scientific value and represent the most important parts of the work of Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva. The publications meet the quantitative requirements outlined in the Regulations for the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Paisii Hilendarski Plovdiv University.

5. Scientific contributions

Milena Angelova Kostova-Garbacheva has chosen a key topic for music education at the lower secondary school level, with significant research issues and a theme for her dissertation. This topic plays a fundamental role in the development of vocal skills in high school students through innovative pedagogical technologies.

The main achievements and contributions in this dissertation can be categorized into two aspects: theoretical and practical-applied.

In the theoretical aspect:

1. The peculiarities of the formation of vocal habits and skills in students at the high school level have been thoroughly analyzed, considering the complexity and multifaceted nature of this process at this specific age, while taking into account the various psychological, physiological, and anatomical features of students within the age range of 13 to 19 years.

2. A significant contribution of the dissertation is the creation of a classification of innovative methods, technologies, and approaches in vocal training, based on their application methods and their pedagogical tools. This provides a structured and comprehensive view of the innovations in vocal pedagogy today.

In the practical-applied aspect, some of the most significant contributions of the dissertation are:

1. The developed system of innovative technologies for forming vocal habits and skills in students, which is applied for the first time in secondary school and represents a comprehensive foundation from which various elements of vocal artistry, corresponding to a specific stage of training based on the students' level, can be drawn.

2. The created system can be considered as a cohesive whole of interconnected elements that combine vocal-technical, artistic-interpretive, and psychological development of students.

3. The proposed new and modern pedagogical technologies for synchronous work on the individual aspects of vocal artistry provide opportunities for rapid and high-quality progress for students, as well as for its remote tracking.

4. The proposed innovative technologies are entirely universal and applicable to all high school students, both in face-to-face and distance learning formats. They combine fundamental principles of vocal pedagogy with specific, suitable technologies that apply only in certain situations and stages of vocal training.

5. The use of new modern computer hardware and software, as well as mobile devices, is specifically defined, along with their wide application as educational tools.

6. Methods and technologies for vocal distance learning are proposed, considering the increasing shift of formal education in schools from in-person to remote learning.

7. Based on the author's experience in vocal pedagogy and performance, a systematic approach to the formation of vocal habits and skills has been developed, which utilizes new and modern technologies and reflects the requirements of the contemporary music industry for versatile young singers with high levels of motivation and technological literacy.

8. The scientific work has broad practical application and is aimed at supporting vocal pedagogical practice for a wide audience – vocal pedagogues, music teachers in general educational schools or private educational centers, instructors in additional forms of education, and vocal ensemble directors.

9. The Bulgarian music education methodology is enriched and developed through the theoretical-applied model of innovative, original music technologies created by Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva.

The identified contributions align with the content of the dissertation and objectively reflect the achievements of Milena Angelova Kostova - Garbacheva as a PhD candidate.

6. Critical remarks and recommendations – None

7. Personal impressions

My impressions are based on the materials presented by the PhD candidate for the competition. As positive personal qualities, I can highlight: motivation, responsibility, diligence, and goal-orientation.

8. Conclusion

The dissertation contains *scientific, practical-scientific, and practical results that represent an original contribution to the scientific field* and **meet all the requirements** of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Rules for the Application of ZRASRB, and the relevant Rules of the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski.”

The dissertation **demonstrates** that the PhD candidate, Milena Angelova Kostova-Garbacheva, **possesses** profound theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the methodology of music education, showcasing qualities and abilities for conducting independent scientific research.

Based on the above, I confidently give my **positive evaluation** for the research presented in the reviewed dissertation, abstract, achieved results, and contributions, and ***I recommend the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” to Milena Angelova Kostova-Garbacheva in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional field: 1.3. Pedagogy of Education in... Doctoral Program: Methodology of Music Education.***

09.05. 2025 г.

Reviewer:

Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Dimitrova