

# **OPINION**

from

Prof. Dr. Ermila Schweizer,  
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on the dissertation of

**Nikolay Hristov Cheynov**

PhD student in independent training,  
Doctoral Program "Music", NBU,  
professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art,  
scientific specialty "Musicology and Musical Art"

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Panayot Panayotov

on the topic

**"THE TROUBADOURS AND THE CONTEMPORARY BARD  
CULTURE"**

for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"

## **Brief biographical data**

Nikolay Cheynov was born in 1957 in Sofia. He started playing guitar at the age of 8, with teacher Simeon Simov. He graduated from the stage department of the Bulgarian State Conservatory (now NAM) in 1979 and began teaching guitar at various community centres. He took part in the famous at that time vocal-instrumental ensemble of Sofia University "Collegium", performed chamber concerts for classical guitar and flute. Since 1986 he has lived and worked in Norway, where he has had a highly successful career as a troubadour. In addition to the Scandinavian countries, he has performed in Spain, the United United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, etc. His repertoire includes besides standard music, performed by professional troubadour entertainers, music from the Irish and Scottish song folklore. He has recorded three CDs. In 2006 he returned to Bulgaria, continuing to travel and perform as a troubadour. In 2014 he graduated with a master's degree in Music Art and Classical instrument – guitar, from the class of Prof. Dr. Panayot Panayotov. Nikolay Cheynov is a guitar lecturer at NBU and Sofia University.

The dissertation contains a total of 215 pages, which includes an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, extensive bibliography (100 titles in English, Spanish, Swedish, Norwegian, Serbo-Croatian, Russian and Bulgarian), a siteography (141 sites) and glossary.

The work is very well structured and distinguished by precise and clear expression. In the introduction, the doctoral candidate justifies the choice of the dissertation topic, which is closely related to his professional realization as a troubadour and his dedication to this art. The aims, subject, objectives and methodology of the research are stated.

The **first chapter** deals with the predecessors of the troubadours - the bards in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, England; the filid in Scotland and Ireland; the scop in England; and the scalds in Norway and Iceland. The terms are explained in detail, the etymology of the words, traces the historical context in which they appear, lists the names of the more significant contributors with brief biographies appended.

The **second chapter** is devoted to the troubadours, beginning with their appearance in the lands of the Occitania around year 1100. The etymology of the term “troubadour” is explained in detail, with the author referring to numerous sources. The importance of the art of the troubadours in creating “for the first time in European culture a lyric in a spoken vernacular language that had a distinctly secular character” (p. 26) is emphasised. They list many of the most notable troubadours, with brief biographical details, information on their work and style. A separate section (2.3) lists and explains different styles and genres in the work of the troubadours.

In **chapter three** the author draws our attention to various ramifications and followers in other countries of troubadours – trouvères, minnesingers, minstrels and jongleurs, vagantes and goliards. Concepts are clarified, comparisons are made – what is common and what distinguishes them from the troubadours (e.g. – the more democratic poetry of the troubadours, which brings them closer to folk art). In two overview tables Cheynov visualizes all the concepts relating to bards and troubadours, their predecessors and followers, noting the territories and timeframe of their emergence and decline, as well as periods and prominent representatives. I definitely consider the compilation of these comparative tables as a strong contribution to the study.

**Chapter four** deals with the continuators of the art of the troubadours in the modern times – singer-songwriters of the last one hundred to one hundred and fifty years. Here Cheynov obviously swims in his own waters, the subject is very close to his heart and his great desire to tell us everything he knows, and it is of considerable volume. Modern troubadours are divided geographically – North America, South America, United Kingdom and Ireland, France and Belgium, the Scandinavian countries, Russia, Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Bulgaria. The dissertation does not simply list facts and names, but analyses events and looks for the logic of the processes that leads to the revival of the art of troubadours in the second half of the XIX century.

In the **Conclusion**, a summary of the issues is made, and the contributing moments in the text are presented.

Five **contributions** of the dissertation are listed, which I fully support. In particular, I would like to highlight the contribution of the formulated definitions to the contemporary meaning of the terms “troubadour” and “bard”.

The doctoral candidate has three scientific **publications** related to the topic of the dissertation.

Nikolay Cheynov's dissertation is a thorough scientific research, both in terms of the issues at hand and its analysis and conclusions. It is clear from the presented text that Nikolay Cheynov is an erudite musician with a rich music-theoretical background and a successful concert practice. I congratulate the author and his supervisor – Prof. Dr. Panayot Panayotov and confidently propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Nikolay Cheynov the degree of Doctor in the professional field 8.3. “Music and Dance Art”.

6.01.2024, Sofia

Prof. Dr. Ermila Schweizer