

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova, New Bulgarian University,

on the dissertation work of **NIKOLAY HRISTOV CHEYNOV**

PhD student in independent training

at the Department of Music, New Bulgarian University,

with scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Panayot Panayotov, on:

“THE TROUBADOURS AND THE CONTEMPORARY BARD CULTURE”

for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education and Science

in the professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art

Biographical data

Nikolay Cheynov was born in Sofia. From the age of 8 he started studying guitar with maestro Simeon Simov. Alone and in duet with Loreta Simova he won city competitions in classical guitar competitions. They both participated in television programmes. Nikolay Cheynov graduated with honours from the stage department of the Bulgarian State Conservatory in 1979. He taught guitar in the community network in Sofia. In the 1970s he participated in the vocal-instrumental ensemble “Collegium” at Sofia University. Together with flutist Bistra Karafilova, he performed classical guitar and flute concerts. B 1986 he settled in the Kingdom of Norway and developed a highly successful career as a troubadour, subsequently inspiring and training a host of Bulgarian troubadours. He has played in the Scandinavian countries, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, etc. Besides the standard music performed by professional troubadours, he also specialized in the music of Irish and Scottish song folklore. Cheynov has recorded three CDs. In 2006 he returned to Bulgaria, but continued to travel abroad as perform as a troubadour. In 2014 he graduated with honours as a Master of Music at the NBU – Music Art and Classical Instrument – Guitar, in the class of Prof. Dr. Panayot Panayotov. Nikolay Cheynov continues his work as a lecturer of guitar at New Bulgarian University and Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. He speaks and writes English, Norwegian, Russian, Spanish and Serbo-Croatian languages.

Contents of the dissertation

The dissertation was discussed and proposed for defense at a meeting of the Council of Department of Music at NBU. It contains an introduction, four chapters¹ conclusion, appendix and contributions. More than 100 written sources in Bulgarian, English, Russian, Spanish, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and Serbo-Croatian languages have been used in the dissertation.

¹ Chapter I. HISTORICAL FACTS (1.1 Bards; 1.1.1. Irish bards; 1.1.2. Scottish bards; 1.1.3. Welsh bards; 1.2. Philid; 1.3. Scops; 1.4. Scalds). Chapter II. TROUBADOURS. REPRESENTATIVES AND GENRES (2.1. Origin and character of the work of the troubadours; 2.2. Representatives; 2.3. Styles and genres; 2.4. The Bulgarian trace). Chapter III. TROUVÈRES, MINNESINGERS, MINSTRELS AND JONGLEURS, VAGANTES AND GOLIARDS (3.1. Trouvères; 3.2. Minesingers; 3.3. Minstrels; 3.4. Jugglers; 3.5. Goliards and vagantes; * Time table for the periods of existence of the various poetic-musical societies). Chapter IV. MODERN TROUBADOURS (4.1. North America; 4.2. South America; 4.3. United Kingdom and Ireland; 4.4. France and Belgium; 4.5. Italy; 4.6. Scandinavian countries; 4.7. Russia (Soviet Union); 4.8. Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans; 4.9. Bulgaria.

They are reflected in the bibliography at the end. The siteography also reflects the 141 sources used from the web, in the pointed out above languages. At the end of the dissertation, there is a glossary of terms, which is very useful.

Accurately formulated aims and objectives of the dissertation

In this study various aspects of the past, historical development and the role of the troubadour (or related professions) in their respective eras. The study introduces the most prominent representatives of these professions and the contributions they have made to the world culture.

The relevance and motivation for the topic at hand also stems from the fact, that often the terms “bard” and “troubadour” are used casually - almost as synonyms, which confuses learners and the general public. The aim of this dissertation is to give an extensive historical overview of all professions and representatives related to bards and troubadours, in order to bring greater clarity to the subject matter. To trace the relationship and similarities between ancient, medieval and modern representatives of poetic and musical creativity. **The subject** of this dissertation is biographies, methods of work and contributions of the most significant representatives of the poetic-musical classes during the different time periods in the respective ethnic regions, kingdoms, empires and states. **The methodology** of the dissertation involves the presentation of information, gathered and translated from a large number of sources, with subsequent analysis of the contribution of the subject presented, to world culture (including contemporary bard culture). **The tasks** of the dissertation are: 1) Arrangement and presentation of all known poetic-musical societies that have inhabited Europe (and later – America) from antiquity to – the present, and pointing out their most iconic figures. 2) Analyzing the contribution of these societies to the world culture and their (possible) contribution to the contemporary bard-culture. 3) Compiling a table reflecting the periods and places of existence and activity of the respective poetic-musical styles. 4) Clarifying the contemporary significance and usage of the terms “bard” and “troubadour”.

Significance of the research problem in scientific and applied terms

This study set out to present a comprehensive picture of the world and history of troubadours, their predecessors, contemporaries and followers. Such a study and selection in a broad historical scope has not been known to been done, especially in Bulgaria. *“In the last decades of the past XX century and the beginning of our XXI century, the profession of the troubadour became increasingly popular. A musician who sings songs and simultaneously accompanies himself on a guitar, while depending on the situation, speaks and entertains the audience”* (quote from dissertation).

Chapter I introduces the predecessors of the troubadours: the bards and the filid, the scops and the scalds, who lived and worked respectively in ancient Ireland, Wales, Scotland, England and Scandinavia. **Chapter II** describes the actual troubadours who emerged in the late XI – early XII century in the lands of ancient Occitania and lasted for two and a half centuries. The main styles and genres of their work are outlined, as well as their relationship to the Bulgarian history. **Chapter III** is devoted to the contemporaries and followers of troubadours from northern France, the lands of the Holy Roman Empire and the Anglo-Saxon lands: trouvères, minnesingers, minstrels and jongleurs, vagantes and goliards. At the end of **Chapter III** a table is created, with the historical positioning of the different societies of bards, troubadours, etc. from antiquity to the bygone XX century. In **Chapter IV** are pointed out the most significant

“troubadours” of our time: the singer-poets, performers of their own songs who left the brightest mark in the cultural history of the XX and (already begun) XXI century. To begin with, the great names of North American poetry-song culture who have greatly inspired their European counterparts, followed by some of the greatest artists of South American “engaged” song. The study also introduces the reader to the most significant “contemporary troubadours” from the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Italy, Sweden, and Norway, Denmark, Russia, and the former Soviet Union. The following are significant names of contemporary troubadours from Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and (naturally) – some of the most prominent Bulgarian ones.

The degree of knowledge of the state of the problem and the relevance of the literature

The dissertant has worked as a professional troubadour for decades². After Cheynov made this his scientific study, we may be sure that in this part of Europe, he is the best specialist in the field. *“Today we could divide modern professional troubadours into two categories: 1. Prominent professional troubadours (such as Bob Dylan, Vladimir Vysotsky). 2. Professional troubadours - entertainers who perform in entertainment venues. While for the first group some also use the term “bard”, for the second the established name in modern terms is always “troubadour”. Professional troubadours of the second group today perform both their own and other people's compositions, working as entertainers in clubs, bars, pubs, on cruise ships, etc. Some of them also use additional technical tools such as drum machines, sequencers, computers and so on, while others (usually – the best) perform with just an acoustic guitar. However, it should be noted that, as pointed out in the section “Minstrels”, to a large extent the modern professional troubadours who work in entertainment establishments could be likened to their counterparts from the Middle Ages – the minstrels. The term “bard” in its modern meaning could be divided into two types: 1. bard who is only a poet and is so called out of respect for his valuable work and 2. bard who creates both lyrics and music, and performs them himself in the form of a song.”* (Cheynov's quote) The doctoral student presents demonstrably the different stages of historical development and all the varieties of what today we call troubadours or bards. He points to specific names and personalities who contributed most to the enrichment of world culture and the prosperity of this profession (or vocation), notwithstanding the vast amount of matter on the subject. Over the centuries, some have left their mark with their brilliant poems, others with their music, others with the magic of their performances. **The dissertation also pays special attention to the Bulgarian trace in this huge kaleidoscope of names.**

Correctness in citing a representative number of authors

Nikolay Cheynov is correct in his citations. He uses a wide range of literature and siteography, which is rich enough and on which he has built and proved his thesis.

Contributions of the dissertation

I would present the contributions of the dissertation as follows:

1. This is the first time such a research and selection has been done in Bulgaria. Systematized and analyzed are the most important periods in the existence of the

² <https://bnt.bg/bg/a/nikolaj-shejnov-parviyat-balgarski-profesionalen-trubadur> (visited 25.01.2024).

bards, troubadours and their predecessors and followers in Europe and America from antiquity to the present day.

2. Time tables for the emergence, apogee and disappearance of the various representatives of bard-culture through the centuries, as well as indicative tables for the historical positioning of the different periods in the development of world culture, are created.
3. Differences are clarified and definitions of the contemporary meaning of and understanding of the terms “troubadour” and “bard” are given
4. The dissertation research can be used as a guide and source of informational enrichment by any beginner or practicing professional troubadour, to students in training, to teachers. It can be a foundation for popular culture as well as in specialized educational institutions in the field of musical culture.

Assessment of the relevance of the abstract to the main points and contributions of the dissertation.

The abstract corresponds to the thesis.

Personal qualities of the author (if known to the reviewer)

I have known Nikolay Cheynov since the period of his studies and teaching at NBU. He is a serious musician and in demand teacher. He has a wide repertoire, great technique. He is meticulous both in his performance work and in teaching, and now states his quality in his research. He has the advantage of being fluent in many languages, which enables him to read sufficient scientific and specialized literature in the original. In addition to Bulgarian, sources in English, Russian, Spanish, Norwegian, Swedish and Serbo-Croatian have been used, translated by the PhD student. I also congratulate his supervisor Prof. Dr. Panayot Panayotov.

Publications on the dissertation topic

The PhD candidate has enough (3 publications) on the topic of the PhD:

Cheynov, Nikolay. *The Troubadours – origin and contribution to medieval culture.* In: *Young Scientific Forum on Music and Dance*, issue 10, NBU, 2016.

Cheynov, Nikolay. *Stylistic peculiarities and characteristics in the work of trouvères, minnesingers, minstrels, jongleurs, goliards,* In: *Young Scientific Forum for Music and Dance*”, issue 11, NBU, 2017

Cheynov, Nikolay. *The great troubadours of Scandinavia and their relationship to the European tradition,* In: *Scientific Conference In: Young Scientific Forum for Music and Dance*”, issue. 18, NBU, 2023, in press.

I will conclude this **OPINION** with the following assessment:

The PhD student's performance meets the scientific metrics for the degree of Doctor of Education and Science, according to the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff of

the Republic of Bulgaria. The dissertation work of Nikolay Cheynov, PhD student at NBU, with scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Panayot Panayotov, entitled **THE TROUBADOURS AND THE CONTEMPORARY BARD CULTURE**, together with his contributions with scientific and applied qualities, as his publications, I consider quite sufficient to give my convinced positive evaluation and to propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and degree of Doctor of Science in the professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, to Nikolay Hristov Cheynov, according to the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria.

3.12.2023, Sofia

Prof. Dr. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova