

## OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Tsvetan Milchev Nedyalkov, NAM “Pancho Vladigerov”,  
on a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

in: field of higher education 8. Arts

professional field 8.3 “Music and Dance Art”

Doctoral Program “Musicology and Musical Art”

**Author:** Nikolay Cheynov

**Subject:** “The troubadours and the contemporary bard-culture”

**Scientific supervisor:** prof. dr. Panayot Panayotov, New Bulgarian University

Since the professional and creative path of the PhD student is closely related to the topic of this dissertation, I consider it important to mention some biographical data.

At the age of 8, Nikolay Cheynov began studying classical guitar with Simeon Simov. He graduated with honors from the stage department at Bulgarian State Conservatory in 1979 and taught guitar at the community network in the town. He also taught at the guitar school in Sofia. In 1986 he settled in the Kingdom of Norway and developed highly successful career as a troubadour, subsequently inspiring and training a large number of other Bulgarian troubadours. He has performed in Scandinavian countries, Spain, The United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and others. In 2014 he graduated with honours as Master's degree in Music Art and Classical Instrument - Guitar, from the NBU class of Prof. Dr. Panayot Panayotov.

I consider the choice of the topic, namely “The troubadours and the contemporary bard-culture” as natural continuation of Cheynov's creative search and interests. As he himself mentions in the introduction of his work, the motivation for examining this research, arises from the fact, that over the last hundred years the terms “bard” and “troubadour” have been used rather casually – almost as synonyms, which sometimes sounds confusing to general public.

From the very beginning, a very clear and specific idea, that the PhD student has in terms of **the goal** set in this study, namely: to make a more extensive historical overview of all related to bards and troubadours professions and representatives. In order to achieve this goal, the following tasks have been set: arranging and presenting all the known poetic and musical styles that inhabited Europe, an analysis of the contribution of the estates to world culture, the compilation of a table reflecting the periods and places of existence and activity of the respective poetic-musical societies.

The research tools used in the dissertation are the historical-chronological approach, as well as the use of general methods of analysis and synthesis.

The work is structured in an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a reference to main contributions, bibliography, siteography and glossary. Contents is 210 pages long, using over 100 written sources in Bulgarian, English, Russian, Spanish, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and Serbo-Croatian, also 141 electronic sources from the Internet.

*Chapter One* collects information on the predecessors of the troubadours: the bards and philid, who lived and worked in ancient Ireland, Wales, Scotland, England and Scandinavia. At the end of this chapter, the doctoral student makes the following summary that the first bards appeared at least around 150 BC, who were the forerunners and pioneers of other representatives of poetic-musical creativity in Europe that followed them, such as the filid, the scops, the scalds, and later the troubadours, the trouvères, the minnesingers, minstrels, goliards.

The actual troubadours are the focus of the study in *chapter two*. They appeared in the late 11th and early 12th centuries in the lands of ancient Occitania and lasted for two and a half centuries. The main styles and genres of their creativity is pointed out, as well as their relation to Bulgarian history. As a very important and interesting contribution I consider the presentation of the hypothesis of the so-called “Bulgarian trace” in the history of the appearance of the troubadours.

*Chapter Three* is devoted to the contemporaries and followers of the troubadours of northern France, the lands of the Holy Roman Empire and the Anglo-Saxon lands: the trouvères, the minnesingers, the minstrels, the jongleurs, the vagantes and goliards. As an original and interesting, I find Cheynov's idea of creating a table of historical positioning of the different orders of bards, troubadours, etc. from antiquity to the XX century.

The core of this study, in my view, and its most important contributions are to be found in *Chapter Four*, entitled "The Modern Troubadours". Here, the most significant "troubadours" of our time are identified: the singer-poets, performers of their own songs, who have left the most vivid traces in the cultural history of the XX and the already begun XXI century.

I consider one of the most important and essential elements of the dissertation the pointing out significant names of contemporary troubadours from Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans and (naturally) – some of the most prominent Bulgarian authors. This information definitely has a scientific contribution.

I fully agree with the scientific and applied contributions thus presented by dissertation:

- This is the first time such a survey and selection are made.
- The most significant periods of existence of bards, troubadours and their predecessors and followers in Europe and America from antiquity to the present are systematized and analyzed.
- Time tables have been created 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.
- The differences are clarified and definitions of the contemporary meanings and understandings of the terms "troubadour" and "bard" are given.
- The dissertation research can be used as a reference and source for information enrichment by every beginner or practicing professional troubadour.

Nikolay Cheynov presents a serious and thorough scientific study that meets all the criteria for a dissertation. The set goals and objectives are achieved. Important conclusions directly related to the topic have been drawn. The methodology used is up-to-date and meets the modern requirements for conducting research work. The work is well structured and presents the issues considered with maximum clarity.

In conclusion, I give my positive evaluation of the presented dissertation and propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Nikolay Cheynov the scientific and educational Doctor degree.

5.01.2024

Sofia

Prof. Dr. Tsvetan Nedyalkov