

# **REVIEW**

by

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on the dissertation work for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of

**“Doctor”** in the professional field 8.3 “Music and Dance Art”

of master **Nikolay Hristov Cheynov**

Topic of the dissertation:

**“The Troubadoures and the Contemporary Bard Culture”**

Academic supervisor: Prof. Panayot Panayotov, PhD

## **Biographical data about the PhD student**

According to the documentation provided to me, Nikolay Cheynov was born in Sofia in 1957. From the age of 8 he started to study guitar with maestro Simeon Simov. Alone and in a duo with guitarist Loreta Simova he won city competitions in classical guitar. The two of them participated in television programs. 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 late 1970s he participated in the cult vocal-instrumental ensemble “Collegium” at Sofia University. Together with flutist Bistra Karafilova they gave concerts for classical guitar and flute. In 1986 he settled in the Kingdom of Norway and developed a successful career as a contemporary troubadour, who subsequently inspired and trained many Bulgarian troubadours. He has performed in the Scandinavian countries, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and elsewhere. In addition to the music performed by professional troubadour entertainers, he specialized in Irish and Scottish song folklore. He has

recorded 3 CDs. In 2006 Cheynov returned to Bulgaria, but continued to travel abroad and to realize himself as a contemporary troubadour. In 2014 he graduated with honors as a Master's student at NBU with a degree in Musical Art and Classical Instrument - Guitar, in the guitar class of Prof. Dr. Panayot Panayotov. Since then Master Nikolay Cheynov has continued his work as a lecturer in guitar at New Bulgarian University and at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. He speaks and writes English, Norwegian, Russian, Spanish and Serbo-Croatian.

**The dissertation submitted to me for review is 214 pages long**, close to the BSS. Its **content** is as follows:

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The **bibliography** consists of **100** printed editions, of which **79 are in Latin alphabet** (mostly in English, with individual books in Spanish, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian) and **20 in Cyrillic** (mostly in Bulgarian, but also in Russian); I do not know whether all the books mentioned in it are cited in the text of the dissertation. The sitegraphy is from 141 sources with similar linguistic and cultural characteristics.

**The abstract sufficiently reflects the dissertation, structurally and substantively.**

**Reviewer's reflections on the dissertation topic and on the dissertation itself - possible basis for discussions during the dissertation defense.**

**Is Nikolay Cheynov's dissertation up to date?** It is always topical to try to go into history and compare it with modernity. Researching old forms of “barding” (shall I call it that?) and “troubadouring” is difficult because you have to know a lot of languages – even old ones. You have to know Latin, hence its derivative French forms, also Spanish, Italian before that, you have to know German and Old German, and its dialects (?), brought to (?) today's Flemish, Norwegian, Danish, respectively their old forms, respectively and the linguistic and cultural interactions over the centuries. You should know Old Greek, too, before that!... I recall the Portuguese version of the troubadours, the jograes, which I think is not mentioned in the dissertation.

The other issue we often encounter when dealing with old authors is that the same authors have different names – variants – as spellings, and they also have Latinized names.

**Is Nikolay Cheynov's dissertation a personal work: yes, I am convinced. He himself is essentially a contemporary troubadour.** And its text, because it is not quite polished as a scientific text – it is quite obvious that it is his personal work.

I think it would be nice if colleague Cheynov would collect to his dissertation exposition 2-3 relevant songs from each commented old or contemporary “troubadour” - that way it would also make a wonderful reader (chrestomathy): you talk about so-and-so, here he offers you 1, 2 or 3 of his most famous songs, let's say. An author's (N.C.'s) choice – not saying it will be the right and best possible choice, but it is a choice. Yes, you can search the net for relevant songs, but if they are attached to the show, it will be easier. However, copyright would probably preclude such an endeavour – even if given the excuse that it was educational literature...

We know that “protest songs”, if not commercialized, will be heard and learned by almost no one. You're protesting, but who cares except a small number of bystanders? Who is going to take any of their time at all to listen to you if you're not advertised, ta famous? Who will even take the time to listen to you if you are not advertised, so famous. This applies especially to the new times and modern troubadours. The point is also valid for non-protest art – you can do wonderful things, but if you don't bring profit to someone, so that they advertise you to sell you as much as possible, you don't exist.

Regarding the old times, Nikolay Cheynov presents us with a... fairy tale. And this is natural and inevitable. How true are the things in it, who can confirm? (Not a problem of N.Ch., but historical.) I remind that we can start from the question:

“Homer? Did he exist?” In the details and specifics of one story or another, the veracity is questionable, but in the big picture: no. There remain eternal human themes: of love, of fidelity and infidelity, of sharing or not, of joy, of sorrow, of life, of its cycle, of death... So I am very glad that Nikolay Cheynov has allowed himself the pleasure and satisfaction of spending so much time on the question of the bards and troubadours of old and today, of researching so much information, collecting it and presenting it to us. I know from my own experience (from my own research and publications – commentaries, articles, studies, monographs, extensively annotated translations, etc.) that the Bulgarian-speaking reader - especially in today's commercially pragmatic and, I would even say, vulgar times - is not interested in the old things. But Nikolay has had his pleasure and satisfaction! This turns out to be the most important thing in life – in the real, true life of each one of us. Now he's going to become a doctor too, well done!

Yes: the bards, the troubadours, the trouvères, the spielmen, the minnesingers... this is a subject that is very interesting, but it is alien to our culture. So this work of Nikolay Cheynov has given him great pleasure, it has taken him a bit of time and he has invested in it quite a bit of effort, but it has given him a lot of joy and it has made his life more meaningful, because he is also a bard and a troubadour. (I keep mixing the two concepts. Nikolay differentiates the bard from the troubadour in that the bard can also be only a poet, without singing, or even accompanying himself on a musical instrument. I agree with his differentiation.) These are the positives of the development. The negatives are, again, I will say that I do not believe, unfortunately, that it has many readers in Bulgaria.

Back to the “old days”: the “dark” and “ligh” styles should be clarified to be understood as the “enigmatic” (understood only by “initiates”) style, and the “open, clear” style (accessible to “all”), let us say.

If Mr. Cheynov wants to publish his work in book copies as well - because they remain physically longer than software, the text must – from the point of view of professional book publishing – be finished by a proofreader, and before that it must be finished as citations, etc., as a scientific text. Uniform standards must also be maintained: for example, for some commented singers (of modern times) only years of birth and death are given, for others – and dates; for the living no years of birth are given (but they should be), etc. In places there is also a need for an editor. Since I have read the abstract (first) and then the dissertation (now

with pencil in hand) in full, I have done most of this work in it up to p. 90, where I have now stopped because it is neither my job nor my duty. Missing commas, missing quite a few sentence periods, missing intervals, short dashes instead of long ones and vice versa, etc. These lapses in spelling, especially in punctuation, are also perfectly understandable given the 20 years of life of my colleague Nikolay Cheynov in Norway.

However Mr. Cheynov through his dissertation makes a very good panorama of this type of artists and mediators - in its content it is indicated from which times and geographical areas and countries they are relevant, and on a large number of singers date extensive biographies, lists of songs, ratings, awards, commentaries, etc., for others, also not a small number, others he indicates only by their names and gives a most general assessment. So, a perusal of his dissertation gives a very good information on the subject and could, this dissertation, be used as a study text, as a reader. Including Bulgarian cultural history.

**Let us return to the formally-required for a dissertation review “reporting”:**

The doctoral student has accurately stated the goals and objectives of his research (see pages 3 - 4 of the dissertation). The chosen research methods meet the stated aims and objectives of the dissertation. The doctoral candidate has a sufficient knowledge of the state of the art – in accordance not only with the literature used, but also with knowledge and personal experience as a performing musician, historian and theorist, and teacher.

I accept in general the contributions of the PhD student's thesis. The material used in the study is reliable. The dissertation and the contributions of the doctoral candidate prove that he has a deep historical and theoretical knowledge

of the specialty and a high capacity for independent scientific research. Publications on the dissertation have sufficiently made it publicly available.

**IN CONCLUSION: based on all the above, I am IN FAVOUR of awarding the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to NIKOLAY HRISTOV CHEYNOV for his dissertation “THE TRUBADORS AND CONTEMPORARY BARD-CULTURE”.**

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