

PEER REVIEW

by **Prof. Dr. Todor Aleksandrov Kirov**

for dissertation work for the award of educational and scientific degree “Doctor” under field 8.3
“Musicology and Music Art”,

with author: **Dimitar Hristov Hristov**,

doctoral student at the Musical Folklore Department,

Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography

Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv,

on the topic: “Contemporary Trends in Conducting when Working with Orchestra of Folk
Instruments”

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The preservation of the traditional Bulgarian musical folklore is an essential necessity from the point of view of preserving our national Bulgarian identity. Arising from this are the researches that are made in order to study it and pass it on to the next generations.

The topic of folk and orchestral music making in Bulgaria has so far remained out of the attention of researchers, as the publications mainly concern folk singing and choral performing arts.

Looking back, we see that until the middle of the 20th century, folk instruments existed in people’s daily lives at home, as well as during holiday rituals and merriment. In the 50’s the folk instrumentalists took the concert stage and the broadcasting of their performances began on the Bulgarian National Radio. As a result, there were changes in the manner of playing, author’s melodies appeared, instrumental groups and orchestras were formed, and leaders and later conductors of these ensembles were established.

Today, the scientific and pedagogical literature has scarce information regarding the peculiarities of folk orchestral music, and especially in the direction of the specifics of the work of orchestral conductors. This, in turn, necessitates research, analysis, and comparisons. On this topic is the research of Dimitar Hristov, doctoral student at the Musical Folklore Department at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts.

Dimitar Hristov presented for the defense an impressive creative asset:

- Work as a Conductor of choirs and Chief Conductor of the Trakiya Folklore Ensemble – Plovdiv, Chief Artistic Director of the Pirin Ensemble – Blagoevgrad, Screenwriter and Director of the Gala Concert of the 11th edition of the Pirin Sings Festival, Director of the Macedonia Folk Festival for Macedonian urban and author’s songs, Director of the “Aleno Mushkato” International Festival dedicated to the work of Diko Iliev in Oryahovo, Composer at the Nikola Vaptsarov Drama Theater – Blagoevgrad, and a lecturer at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts.

In 2014 Hristov improved his conducting qualification in Moscow, Russia. For ten years he has been performing as a soloist, composing music and conducting prestigious Russian ensembles.

For nine years (since 2011) he has been the conductor of the Folk Music Orchestra at the Bulgarian National Radio. He has realized over 15 projects with the participation of more than 30 famous solo musicians, chamber, and choir formations. Under his leadership, the orchestra has been awarded many prestigious prizes and awards.

Dimitar Hristov is a two-time winner of the Golden Lyre of the Union of Bulgarian Musicians and Dancers. He has been awarded for writing a symphonic work in 7/8. Hristov is a member of the Union of Bulgarian Composers, the Bulgarian Music Association, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Union of Bulgarian Musicians and Dancers, and Musicautor. As an instrumentalist he has realized dozens of studio and concert performances, and as a composer and performer he is the author of more than 20 publications – CDs and DVDs.

The topic of Dimitar Hristov's dissertation is focused on the conductor and his role in contemporary folk orchestral music making. It is interesting, current, and unexplored. Definitely Dimitar has a talent and affinity for conducting and processing folk melodies, as well as for directing concerts, through which the conducting and composition product is realized. This is probably the reason why he started this research.

The dissertation of Hristov is creative and artistic. As an asset he presents six prestigious concerts under his direction, with the participation of the Folk Music Orchestra at the Bulgarian National Radio, the Plovdiv State Opera Orchestra with soloists from the orchestra of Trakiya Folk Ensemble and the Academic Folk Orchestra of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv. The concerts attract attention with their scientific substantiation, logically padded concept, excellent directing, and professional stage realization, presenting both the purity of the Bulgarian instrumental folk music and its processing and interaction with the folk choir and symphonic arts.

Nowadays, folk orchestral art is at an advanced stage of professional and stage transformation. Dimitar aims to prove the role of the conductor for the realization of this professional and stage transformation, and to present the specifics of the rehearsal, recording and concert process, as well as its combination with composition and management. He has given dozens of concerts, and for his doctoral studies he presents six of them as basic material for development of the topic. He looked for a different theme at each of the concerts, in order to provide greater contrast and a better opportunity for comparison. Each of the works included in the stage performances is unique in itself and with its own concept. The music is based on Bulgarian folk melodies.

In close connection with the concerts, as part of the doctoral program is the theoretical scientific development. What can be said about it?

In the theoretical work “Contemporary Trends in Conducting when Working with Orchestra of Folk Instruments” very diligently, in detail, and competently Dimitar Hristov presents the work of the contemporary conductor of a folk orchestra. It is not known whether a special study, focused on the systematization of the issues in folk orchestral music and conducting from the middle of the last century until now, has been done so far, as well as on the complex of diverse activities performed by the active practitioner, namely: conductor, composer, arranger, pedagogue, mediator, and manager. The experience gained as a participant in all events

related to the Bulgarian folk orchestra since the nineties of the last century, justifies the motives and gives Hristov courage for theoretical work related to orchestral music and conducting. His creative path and competence are a good prerequisite for in-depth elaboration on this topic.

The present theoretical work is the first attempt to gather in a common research focus and to illuminate, analyze and systematize the latest history of folk and orchestral performing and conducting art. The study covers processes and phenomena that occurred in the period from 1950s to present time. It is made on an empirical basis, based on accurate facts and personal experience over the past 20 years. The analysis is precise and theoretically thorough.

Dimitar Hristov is a popular name in Bulgaria. He is one of the leading specialists in the field of Bulgarian musical folklore, combining at the same time performing activities as a conductor, instrumentalist, tambourine player, and composer. The presented materials are valuable, with a contribution to science, and meet the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

The topic “Contemporary Trends in Conducting when Working with Orchestra of Folk Instruments” is important, relevant, and suitable for research. Through the present work Hristov enriches the existing knowledge and presents new facts, judgments, and conclusions about the work of the conductor with an orchestra of folk instruments.

My assessment is positive and high. I am convinced that Dimitar Hristov Hristov is worthy of being awarded the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

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Prof. Dr. TODOR KIROV