

REVIEW

by Prof. Boryana Lambreva, PhD

NMA Prof. Pancho Vladigerov

professional field 8.3. Music and dance art

for

the dissertation of

Ivaylo Trifonov Mihaylov

„The songs of Reynaldo Hahn and the application of the French phonetic transcription in the interpretation in French, compared to the practical transcription and transliteration in Bulgarian“

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in

Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

Scientific supervisor:

Prof. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak, PhD

At first glance, the creative biography of Ivaylo Mihaylov reveals a musician with broad and diverse interests in the field of vocal - opera and chamber art - one of those musicians who are able to collect and reflect in their work various manifestations of their talent, a high level of general and specialized culture, good organizational skills and inexhaustible energy. He graduates with a Bachelor's degree in Classical Singing from the National Music Academy Prof. Pancho Vladigerov, then Mihaylov continues his education with three master's degrees in: Vocal pedagogy, Art management and Music and Stage Directing at NBU and AMDFA. He also improved his vocal performance at the Opera Academies in Rome and Osimo, Italy. He has an excellent command of Italian, French, English and Russian and defines himself a singer and interpreter of both opera and chamber music. Over the years he has made a name of a versatile and profound professional in his creative pursuits. In support of this statement are his numerous performances as a soloist at

the operas in Varna, Stara Zagora, Ruse, Burgas, as well as opera houses in Porto, Bucharest, Cagliari, Padua, Spoleto, Gdansk. Among his stage performances stand out the main tenor parts in the operas "La Traviata", "Un ballo in maschera", "Tosca", "La bohème", "Carmen", "Faust" and many others. The PhD student's profile would not be complete without mentioning his projects as a director on Mozart's Bastien and Bastienne, Luigi Cherubini's Il Giocatore and Offenbach's Ba-ta-klan, the latter two performed for the first time in Bulgaria and presented by the Student Opera Theatre at the AMDFA - Plovdiv. Ivaylo Mihailov also has his achievements as a vocal pedagogue of the Plovdiv Boys' Choir and as an assistant professor at AMDFA since 2019, and in recent years he has been active as a chamber musician, with a preference for rarely performed songs.

Obviously, the doctoral student's interest in chamber music, and in particular - in French chamber and vocal music and the peculiarities of its interpretation, lead him to choose the topic of this dissertation. In-depth knowledge of French is an additional prerequisite for this, as well as a necessary condition in scientific research of this type, because one of the most important aspects in the interpretation of the song is related to the way the poetic text is presented as an important component of verbal and musical composition of the vocal chamber form.

The dissertation was discussed and proposed for public defence at a meeting of the Department of Classical and Jazz Performing Arts at MADFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev-Plovdiv, on 29.11. 2021. It has a total volume of 187 pages, organized in an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of cited literature and three appendices. The bibliography includes 91 titles in several languages, 34 of which are from Internet sources. The real research part of the work, as well as the analysis of the chamber vocal works of art are supported and illustrated by 19 tables and 14 musical examples.

The main impression that the present work leaves is the presence of a deep and sincere interest of the author to the topic, his personal motivation to consider the issue from almost all possible angles and perspectives. So far in Bulgaria there has been no attempt to cover so comprehensively and from multiple aspects the topic of authentic singing elocution as an element of interpretation in French, as well as the problem of the need to introduce French phonetic transcription in French singing. The lack of research on such topics in Bulgarian, and on the other hand - the small number of performances of works by Reynaldo Hahn in our country further motivate the doctoral student and prove the timeliness of scientific research. The accumulated knowledge in his practical work as a performer and pedagogue is a natural basis for the successful realization of this idea. Already in the Introduction the author clearly

formulates the main purpose of the dissertation, namely: „*To prove the need for the introduction of a French phonetic transcription for singing in French, by using and analysing the works of Reynaldo Hahn*“ – page 3 of the Abstract. In line with it are the tasks that Ivaylo Mihaylov sets himself - to draw the essential difference between practical transcription and transliteration on the one hand, and transcription in French, on the other, to prove the advantages and benefits of transcription in French.

First of all, I must note the good structuring of the work, thanks to which the thematic development has a coherent and consistent presentation, leading from wider elaboration on the topic to a narrower and more specialized survey, which allows in-depth study of the issue, hence to the deduction of clear and specific examples and evidence in support of the author's thesis.

In the choice of topic and in the way the researched material is written and presented, two main lines are clearly distinguished, outlining the specifics of its contributing nature.

The first refers to the detailed and extensive study and systematization of the chamber-vocal work of Reynaldo Hahn - a composer whose works are not included in the list of the ones traditionally performed in Bulgaria. A chronological table containing all the composer's opuses by time of creation is provided, with complete information about the authors of poetic texts, dedications, editions, subsequent editions, as well as the availability of transcripts or existing other versions of the works. On this basis, the author makes a clear systematization of the overall chamber work of the composer, combining his songs into three main groups: songs in individual editions, song collections and vocal cycles. Each of these groups is examined in detail and described again in chronological order. I consider the information in this part of the work very valuable, because so collected and systematized, it could have a wide practical application and be used as a guide, both by students and teachers with interest in the work of this, not very familiar and performed in our country, composer.

In order to justify the need to transcribe the original language in which the works were written, Ivaylo Mihaylov relies, on the one hand, on a number of works in our theoretical space, which to one degree or another touch and reflect different aspects of the topic and derive a basic information on the adequacy of the presentation of the poetic text as a key element in the interpretation of vocal music. On the other hand, Hahn's views on vocal art are examined in detail, which point to the importance of the issue of good language skills and the clearest possible presentation of the text, not only in its content-dramaturgical, but also in purely vocal-technical sense. All this is subordinated to the goal of reaching perfection in the

reproduction of this indivisible whole, of the "unity" between text and music, existing only in vocal art.

The second line, depicting the nature of the contributions of the dissertation and leading to proving the author's thesis, is based on the analysis of two emblematic for the chamber work of Hahn vocal cycles - "Chansons grises" and "Venezia". In addition to the musical-dramaturgical analysis, here Ivaylo Mihaylov, for the purposes of his scientific dissertation, makes a thorough and detailed study of the lyrics, presenting them differently in the following versions: 1/ original text, 2/ transcription in French, 3/ practical transcription and transliteration, 4 / translation into Bulgarian. This way of presenting, as well as the tabulation of the information, make it possible, on the basis of the analyses made, to illustrate the technology of French phonetic transcription, and at the same time to make a direct comparison between it and the transcription and transliteration to Cyrillic. I fully agree with the conclusions drawn proving the benefits of the introduction of French phonetic transcription, namely:

- Adequate pronunciation when singing in French.
- Faster reading and mastering the lyrics of vocal works.
- Improving the quality of the vocal performance on the basis of a more conscious attitude of the connection between text and music, for a fuller presentation of the character.

I especially want to mention the excellent language in which the dissertation is written. The language is accurate, clear, concise, devoid of overcrowding and unnecessary use of foreign terms, the expose allows easy and smooth introduction into the topic. At the same time, I welcome the completeness and correctness of the presentation of the information in the footnotes, which acquaint us with the titles of the books, documents and quoted texts in their original language.

I accept the contributions of the dissertation presented at the end of the paper as reliable and practically applicable.

The doctoral student has the following publications on the topic:

1. Mihaylov, Ivaylo. Reynaldo Hahn - an unknown author. Collection of reports. International Scientific Conference "Science, Education and Innovation in the Field of Art", AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv, 24-27 October 2019, ISBN 978-954-2963-56-1, p. 190-202.

2. Mihaylov, Ivaylo. Reynaldo Hahn - "CHANSONS GRISES" ("Gray Songs") based on verses by Paul Verlaine. Yearbook. AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv, 2019, p. 95-113.
3. Mihaylov, Ivaylo. The views of Reynaldo Hahn (1875 - 1947) on the art of singing. Evolution versus revolution or patterns of development. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference 17 – 19 September 2020. Volume 1. Ruse, Academic Publishing House of Ruse University.

In conclusion, I am stating my opinion on the dissertation of Ivaylo Mihaylov „*The songs of Reynaldo Hahn and the application of the French phonetic transcription in the interpretation in French, compared to the practical transcription and transliteration in Bulgarian*“ – this is a large-scale, thorough and in-depth work of indisputable scientific and applied value and a valuable contribution to the performance and teaching practice in Bulgaria.

Based on all that has been said so far, *I offer to the esteemed scientific jury in the current competition to award Ivaylo Trifonov Mihaylov the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3. - Music and dance art.*

Sofia, 18th March 2022

Prof. Boryana Lambreva, PhD

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