

REVIEW

by

Prof. Yavor Svetozarov Konov, Ph.D,

Place of work: Department of Music, NBU

Professor in Polyphony

(Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art)

**of the Dissertation for the acquisition
of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor
(Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art,
Scientific field of higher education 8. Arts,
Doctoral program "Musicology and Music Art")**

IVAYLO TRIFONOV MIHAYLOV

with title

**„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”**

Scientific adviser: Prof. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak

Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts

Faculty of Music Pedagogy

AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv

2022

The dissertation submitted to me for review consists of 187 pages with a volume of about 1.5 times compared to that of BDS, so on the basis of the standard it is about 280 pages.

It is structured as follows: Introduction, Three Chapters, Conclusion, Bibliography, Appendices, Contributions of the dissertation, List of author's publications on the topic of the dissertation (3 copies), Declaration of authenticity and originality of the dissertation. The content includes 19 tables, 7 photographic images and 14 musical examples.

The literature used is from 56 sources, of which 45 books and articles in Cyrillic (10 in Russian, 3 translated from Russian, 6 from French, 1 from German, 1 should be in the list of authors in Latin) and 11 in Latin (in French and English). Then follows a list of links to materials on the Internet: 35 in number. Total: 91 sources of information.

The abstract of the dissertation is available on the website of AMDFA, anyone can read it, which gives me the opportunity not to retell the dissertation, I will only give here for guidance its content with headings and subheadings:

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I. THE SONGWRITING OF REYNALDO HAHN

1.1. THE WORK OF REYNALDO HAHN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EPOCH (Belle Époque) END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY - THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

1.2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SONGWRITING OF REYNALDO HAHN

1.3. REYNALDO HAHN'S VIEWS ON VOCAL ART

CHAPTER II. TRANSCRIPTION OF THE TEXT IN VOCAL INTERPRETATION

2.1. THE PHENOMENON OF "UNITY OF POETRY AND MUSIC" IN THE CHAMBER SONG

2.1.1. REYNALDO HAHN – ON THE UNITY OF POETRY AND MUSIC IN VOCAL ART

2.2. SPECIFICS OF THE TRANSCRIPTION OF THE TEXT (PRACTICAL AND PHONETIC)

2.2.1. Theoretical discourse of transcription and transliteration in Bulgarian and phonetic transcription in French

2.2.2. Comparative analysis of the two transcription systems

2.3. PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION TECHNOLOGY IN FRENCH INTERPRETATION

2.3.1. French phonetics. French letters and French phonemes

2.3.2. Liaisons

2.3.3. Consonant connection and vocal connection

CHAPTER III. APPLICATION OF THE TECHNOLOGY OF PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION IN THE INTERPRETATION IN FRENCH OF REYNALDO HAHN'S WORKS

3.1. VOCAL CYCLE "CHANSONS GRISES" ("GRAY SONGS") by
Reynaldo Hahn, BASED ON VERSES OF PAUL VERLAINE

3.1.1. „Chansons grises” („Gray songs“) by Reynaldo Hahn, based on
verses by Paul Verlaine - chronology of the creation of the song cycle

3.1.2. Paul Verlaine and some features of his poetic style

3.1.3. The vocal cycle "Chansons grises" by Reynaldo Hahn – formal and
structural and aesthetic analysis

3.1.4. Cyclicity and specificity in "Gray Songs” („Chansons grises”)

3.1.5. Original, transcription, practical transcription and transliteration, and
free translation of songs from the cycle "Gray Songs" ("Chansons grises") by
Reynaldo Hahn based on verses by Paul Verlaine

3.2. VOCAL CYCLE "VENEZIA" ("VENICE") BY REYNALDO HAHN

3.2.1. „Venezia” (“Venice”) by Reynaldo Hahn in the context of Reynaldo
Hahn's vocal work. Specifics of the text.

3.2.2. “Venezia” by Reynaldo Hahn – formal and structural and aesthetic
analysis

3.2.3. Original, transcription, practical transcription and transliteration, and free translation of the songs from the cycle "Venezia" ("Venice") by Reynaldo Hahn with French lyrics by Maurice Léna

CONCLUSION

The most important thing for me from the doctoral student's biography:

The famous opera singer (tenor) Ivaylo Mihaylov (born 1973), graduate of a French language secondary school, with four foreign languages (French, Russian, English, Italian), with rich personal culture and behaviour, I remember how he came to AMDFA in the classes (our meetings) dedicated to “what is science, what is musicology, how to write a dissertation - with impeccable appearance (everything - clothes, socks, and shoes - a real "Swiss type"...). A person who respects himself, and there is an absolute reason for that, and (due to that) a person who respects others.

With extensive experience as an opera and chamber singer, interpreter - and in particular of French pieces of music, as well as director and educator.

I watched and listened with interest to this (self) portrait of the opera singer Ivaylo Mihaylov: <https://bnt.bg/news/operniyat-pevec-ivailo-mihailov-284274news.html>

So, with Ivaylo Mihaylov's dissertation, I once again immersed myself in the culturally rich history of France (and not only) from the end of the 19th century (Fin de siècle) and the beginning of the 20th century. In other words: Belle Epoque (from the end of the Franco-Prussian War of 1871 until the outbreak of the First World War). Years when people - naively and as in present times - thought that civilization is already so advanced and humanity has already suffered so much that there will be no - there can be no (?) more wars. And then come the interconnected and horrific actions and victims of the First and Second World Wars...

I read with interest the articles about Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947) in English: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reynaldo_Hahn and French https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reynaldo_Hahn Wikipedia: a child prodigy born in Caracas to a mother of Spanish-Dutch-English descent and a father from Hamburg of Israeli descent, who lived in Paris since he was 3 years old. Only 13 years old, he wrote his great song "Si mes vers avaient des ailes" by V. Hugo:

<https://youtu.be/OYIfu8PDqWg>, <https://youtu.be/rk05QTsdO3k>. Subsequently, he becomes the great love of Marcel Proust...). I listened to him singing, accompanying by himself https://youtu.be/P_o8gW2VB58. I also listened to his violin concerto: https://youtu.be/A3yVzB_LpFA, and that for piano and orchestra: <https://youtu.be/FqE3ZUc9-So>, and his sonata for violin and piano: https://youtu.be/s_jkwGhlsSA, and his piano quintet in F-sharp minor: <https://youtu.be/nnYa9egfbXE>, and his sonatina for piano: <https://youtu.be/2RoVpeMEfHM>, and his songs "Latin Etudes" („Études latines“): <https://youtu.be/FQZlvbqw3OM>, and his operetta Ciboulette, albeit in an abbreviated version): <https://youtu.be/bwuV4Cu4toM>, and his musical comedy “Mozart“: <https://youtu.be/771S2PPUGmY>... Of course, I listened in full the two vocal cycles - the object of targeted and detailed research in the dissertation of Ivaylo Mihaylov: 1) "Chansons grises" ("Gray Songs", 7 songs): <https://youtu.be/CAJ7qUZelTg> and 2) „Venezia“ (“Venice”, 6 songs): <https://youtu.be/r17QGFzWkX0> and one more time: <https://youtu.be/IskBD994TBI> (although not in French), as here, also in Italian: <https://youtu.be/cTE7h2gDIpc> – the cycle, sung in French, I could not find on the Internet... I remembered the translation of Cyril Kadiyski's "Autumn Song" by Verlaine: <https://chitanka.info/text/10776>

I am grateful to Ivaylo Mihaylov and Prof. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak, PhD (his research supervisor, to whom he is a pedagogical assistant at AMDFA) for inviting me to review his dissertation. Thus I experienced hours and days of joy, delight, new knowledge and hope that there is still a future for musicology in our country - as a real, cognitively rich place. In lavishly culturally combined music, history of music, general history, literature (poetry, prose), fine arts..., references to comments on the subject by authors from different times and cultures. I immersed again - and this time in depth - into these wonderful and sad (so controversial, take just the life of Paul-Marie Verlaine...), and terrible times (World War I and World War II, interconnected), and in the current tragic days ...

At the time when we were playing with the flutist Stiliana Stavreva, I asked Prof. Dimitar Hristov, PhD (1933-2017, may his memory live for ever) to come to one of our concerts and write us a review. I was a little upset, although then fascinated by

his most short text (I quote from memory): "I listened with pleasure to Stiliana Stavreva and Yavor Konov - I am grateful to them!" I can barely contain myself to deduce my review to something like that: "I read Ivaylo Mihaylov's dissertation with pleasure, enthusiasm and joy: I am grateful to him!"

Some specific work notes:

It is known that the so-called "practical transcription" in Cyrillic is the work of - or for - Bulgarians who do not know French. But they could not use the phonetic French transcription either - it would be useful only for people who more or less know the French and the French phonetic alphabet, so that when they have hesitations about pronunciation, to get help. But in practice the best way to read and sing the French text is with the help of a person who is fluent in French, who speaks or sings, and the others repeat and learn, as he monitors and corrects where necessary.

Personally, I, for greater clarity, in my opinion, would arrange in a table with 3 columns - or if they will be narrow, then in 3 rows one below the other: 1) the French text, 2) its phonetic transcription and 3) the so called "Bulgarian practical" transcription/transliteration with Cyrillic alphabet resembling the French sound.

And - at today's stage of development of technology - I would do one, perhaps slow and perhaps repeated reading of the French text (this also applies to other languages), so that the non-French-speaking signer can orient himself vocally. Because the non-French-speaking signer could not, in my opinion, orient himself well enough by phonetic transcription of the respective French words in their true good sound - when reading, respectively when singing.

On pages No. 86-95 there are an awful lot of rules and norms from the French language - spelling, sound, liaisons (compulsory and elective, optional)... Well done, if my colleague Ivaylo Mihaylov knows them and has a good command of them!

Then follow pages and pages devoted to language, poetry and translations, as well as the most detailed analyses of texts by various authors and music to them by Reynaldo Hahn, respectively of the form, nature and spirit of his music. In addition, the PhD student has added the French phonetic transcription (in winy red colour for distinction) to the French texts along to the music examples.

I went back 20 years, to the time when I devoted hours and days to linguistic indulging comparisons and readings of François Villon - of the difficult for me (linguistic) originals of the XV century - and of their translations by Pencho Simov, Vasil Sotirov and Kiril Kadiyski. And not so much as "verse-making" (formal), but as the transfer of message and spirit from one to another a completely different civilizational language, and in 3 different ways... - the questions of INTERPRETATION.

The doctoral student makes impressively detailed and rich – being multifaceted - analyses of lyrics and music: both formally (vocabulary, constructions, meanings, relationships, nuances, bars, tonalities..., poetry, melody, harmony...).

This culturally rich music dissertation should be disseminated (say in a small print run for major depository centres, otherwise as an e-book - a matter to be decided by the doctoral student, of course): either as a dissertation or as more or less changed in a monograph. I offer to do the services for free as a proofreader, maybe here and there and at least as an editor.

As the singing is in French all the time, the relevance of the topic is constant. Reynaldo Hahn (life, work, vocal works, performance...) - the relevance of the study is also indisputable.

Personally, I would put paragraphs from the "Conclusion" at the beginning of my text, because they clarify the problem that is at the heart of writing this dissertation, which is expressed in its title.

The doctoral student discusses issues of singing and the text-music connection very thoroughly and comprehensively, as well as by quoting various specialist authors, Reynaldo Hahn, and many others.

I read carefully and completely both the dissertation and the abstract. The abstract reflects it sufficiently. I accept the indicated contributions of the dissertation.

I also provide the following: the chosen research methods correspond to the goals and objectives of the dissertation. The material used in the study is reliable. The dissertation and the doctoral student's contributions prove that Ivaylo Mihaylov has deep historical and theoretical knowledge in the specialty and a high ability for independence in conducting research. The personal participation of the doctoral

student is indisputable. The publications on the dissertation have made it public enough.

Congratulations to the research supervisor of the doctoral student - Prof. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak, PhD, including for their creative and teaching tandem, which Prof. Shekerdzhieva has made with Ivaylo Mihaylov (her assistant professor at AMDFA in Plovdiv).

IN CONCLUSION:

On the grounds of the above-stated, I express my approval for the award of the educational and scientific degree Doctor to Ivaylo Trifonov Mihaylov for his dissertation on "The songs of Reynaldo Hahn and the application of French phonetic transcription in the interpretation in French, compared to the practical transcription and transliteration in Bulgarian language". I think that this will be the assessment of the other colleagues from the scientific jury.



Professor Yavor Konov, Ph.D.

Department of Music, NBU

Sofia, 20th March 2022