

## **POSITION**

**by Prof. Borislav Alexandrov Yassenov, PhD  
AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv**

By order No. PD-27-001 of 07.01.2022 of the Rector of AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv, I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury in the procedure for the defence of a 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", for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional field 8.3. Music and dance art, doctoral program "Musicology and music art". The author of the dissertation is Ivaylo Trifonov Mihaylov, a PhD student in independent study programme at the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts, Faculty of Music Pedagogy, with scientific supervisor Prof. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak, PhD from AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv.

The set of materials provided to me includes the following documents: CV, dissertation, abstract, list of scientific publications.

Ivaylo Mihailov is a distinguished opera singer-tenor, with an enviable professional career and an indisputable educational qualification. In 1997 he achieved a Bachelor's degree from the NMA "Pancho Vladigerov" - Sofia. In 2002, after winning a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture of Republic of Bulgaria, he continued his studies in Italy, first at Boris Hristov Academy in Rome, and later at the Academy of Baroque Opera in Osimo. In the same year he defended his Master's degree in Vocal Pedagogy at NBU Sofia. At AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv he studied Art Management and in 2010 defended his Master's degree, and in 2013 he achieved a Master's degree in Music and Stage Directing. His debut as a director was with the opera Bastien and Bastienne by W.A. Mozart. He is a PhD student at AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv, with scientific supervisor Prof. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak, PhD.

The artistic work of the doctoral student is extremely active and rich. His debut at the Sofia National Opera and Ballet was in 2012 as Ernani in Verdi's opera of the same name. The following year he made his debut at the Bucharest National Opera and Ballet as Faust in the Charles Gounod's Opera of the same name. Then come the performances at the Cagliari Opera: Don Jose at the Coliseu do Porto (2014) and the leading role of Vakula in Tchaikovsky's fairy-tale opera Cherevichki. Since 2015 he has been a regular guest soloist in Spoleto, Italy, where he has starred in the operas La bohème (2015), Un ballo in maschera (2016), Carmen (2017). He tours in Perugia, Orvieto, and Assisi. Since 2018 he is a soloist of the State Opera of Stara Zagora. He sang on stages in Palma de Mallorca, Antwerp, Ghent and others. Ivaylo Mihailov has numerous recordings for BNR, BNT, VTV and RAI. He works with conductors Donato Renzetti, Laurent Campellone, Carlo Palleschi, José María Moreno, Mihail Angelov and Borislav Ivanov.

The pedagogical work of the doctoral student is connected with AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv. In 2013/14 he was a mentor and judge in the first edition of the show Popstar to operastar in Vietnam and a vocal educator in X-Factor.

The reference to the scientific publications shows that he has three publications, directly related to the topic of the dissertation.

The current importance of the topic of the dissertation is determined by the interest in "Belle Époque", a period associated with the heyday of culture and art, in which the creative years of Reynaldo Hahn passed, determining his specific style, as well as by the usefulness of viewing and analysing the composer's songs that has left a bright mark in the musical heritage, being the object of the dissertation.

The subject of the study is the French phonetic transcription and the need to apply it in the interpretation of works in French. The issue is studied on the basis of the lyrics of Reynaldo Ann's songs.

The author defends the thesis that for the successful presentation of vocal works in French it is necessary to apply the French phonetic transcription in exchange for the practiced transcription and transliteration in Bulgarian. It is important that the research thesis is based on the professional experience of the doctoral student in linguistic analysis and the vocal performance of works in French.

The aim of the dissertation is to prove the need for the introduction of French phonetic transcription in the performance of works in French, and the hypothesis is that its introduction will contribute to the rapid study of texts when singing in French and will be useful in its practical application in opera theatres and for chamber performers.

The tasks of the study are:

- pointing out the differences between the practiced transcription and transliteration to Cyrillic and the French transcription, in proof of the need for French transcription;
- a comparative analysis of the existing system in opera houses of Cyrillic transcription and transliteration on the one hand, and French phonetic transcription on the other;
- research and presentation of the songwriting of Reynaldo Hahn, in the context of the era and his views on vocal art, in relation to the subject of research;
- to prove the need to abolish the transcription and transliteration practiced today as a means of singing in French;
- justification of the need to introduce French phonetic transcription as a method that helps to read texts faster and perfect pronunciation, contributing to a higher competitiveness of the performer on the international music scene.

The methods used in the dissertation are empirical, theoretical and analytical.

The topic was provoked by the usefulness and necessity of introducing French phonetic transcription, as well as by the personality and work of Reynaldo Hahn and the increased research interest in the Belle Époque.

The dissertation contains an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and appendices.

In the introduction the doctoral student presents his hypothesis and the current importance of the topic, presents the object, subject, purpose, tasks, methods, deduces the benefits, the applicability of the research results.

In the first chapter entitled Songs of Reynaldo Hahn, the dissertation presents the personality of Reynaldo Ann, views on vocal art and the role of words in vocal music, as well as his work in the context of the epoch. The songs of the composer, the editions are described in tabular form, as well as information about their creation, about their variants (transcriptions), etc. A conclusion was made in defence of the thesis.

The second chapter - Transcription of the text in vocal interpretation, is the main part of the dissertation, determining the practical and applied nature, with the most valuable contribution to vocal performance. The connection between lyrics and music in the chamber song is discussed. A summary has been made in which the above connection is manifested at different levels: content, character features, musical expression, aesthetics, it is related to the technology of the process of sound extraction in vocal performance. A comparative analysis of the two transcription systems was performed in support of the thesis. The technology of phonetic transcription in the interpretation in French (French phonetics, letters and phonemes) is presented.

In the third chapter - Application of the technology of phonetic transcription in the interpretation in French of vocal works of Reynaldo Hahn, the vocal cycles of Reynaldo Hahn are studied: "Gray Songs" (Chansons Grises) based on verses by Paul Verlaine and "Venice" (Venezia). A chronology of the creation of the cycles is presented, as well as some features of Paul Verlaine's poetic style. Structural and aesthetic analysis is made. Attention is paid to the peculiarities and

specifics of the texts. Conclusions were made in defence of the thesis, namely the benefits of the introduction of French phonetic transcription that helps for: adequate pronunciation when singing in French, faster reading and mastering of texts, improving the quality of vocal performance in creating the character.

All this will enrich the theoretical and practical skills of singers, will facilitate their work in preparing works with lyrics in French, will help achieve valuable professional interpretation, and will expand the competencies of music educators. The above determines the contributing nature of the dissertation.

The work meets the requirements for creating a dissertation. The voluminous information is presented in a total of 187 pages, of which 168 are the main text. The explanations are substantiated with appropriate musical examples - 14 in number and 19 tables, contributing to creating an even clearer idea of the purpose, object and subject of the dissertation. The bibliography contains 91 sources, of which 56 scientific literature resources and 35 websites.

The abstract is prepared according to the requirements and reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation.

The contributions of the dissertation are expressed in the following:

- for the first time the problem of the introduction of French phonetic transcription, leading to effective work with texts when singing in French, is researched;

- the songs of Reynaldo Ann, a little-known author in our country, has been studied. For the first time in Bulgarian musicology a thorough analysis and genre classification of songs and vocal cycles is made, information about the composer's songs is summarized in chronological order – editions, information about variants (transcriptions, etc.) and the main aspects of his views on vocal art are presented;

- for the first time a phonetic transcription is performed, compared to the practiced transcription and transliteration and free translation of the songs;

- in addition to research, the work has practical and applied value - offers and proves an innovative system that can replace existing practice.

The theoretical work of the candidate has practical applicability and is oriented both to the academic work and to the artistic activity. Each considered problem is theoretically substantiated and clearly explained. This determines the contributing nature of the dissertation.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that Ivaylo Mihaylov's dissertation on "The songs of Reinaldo Hahn and application of French phonetic transcription in the interpretation in French, compared to the practical transcription and transliteration into Bulgarian" impressed me with the depth of the topic, the analyses and the scientific and theoretical substantiation, written in a professional and at the same time accessible language. From what is stated in the dissertation it is evident that Ivaylo Mihaylov is an erudite musician, with rich musical theoretical training and an innovative approach to practical work. I believe that the theoretical dissertation meets the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" set by the Academic Staff Development Act of Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation. This gives me reason to propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Ivaylo Mihaylov the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**".

15<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
Plovdiv

Opinion by: .....  
(Prof. Borislav Yasenov, PhD)