

## **REVIEW**

of the dissertation work of

**Nikolay Stefanov Gurbanov,**

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**Topic: The suites of Kosta Kolev for orchestra of Bulgarian folk instruments**

for awarding educational and scientific degree **Doctor** in Professional field 8.3. Music and dance art;

**Reviewer: Prof Mariana Buleva-Petrova,**

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The dissertation work of Nikolay Gurbanov admitted to defense, meeting all the requirements of the Regulations for the implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions in AMDFA. The presented text and scientific publications cover the Minimum National Requirements.

The author of the dissertation has a Master's degree in "Conducting folk ensembles", has a professional qualification in "Pedagogy of music education" - a teacher of folk singing and is an assistant conductor of folk choir and conducting folk orchestra at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev". His remarkable social, organizational, artistic and scientific work is impressive: director or founder of conventions, competitions, periodicals, jury member, award winner, (co)-author of collections, textbooks, articles and reports, monograph. Only 28 years old, he has the necessary competencies to take on high responsibilities, to inspire and implement bold initiatives and thus achieve an impressive personal presence in the various modern forms of existence and transformation of Bulgarian musical folklore.

These qualities and abilities explain the successfully performed large-scale preparatory and parallel work in the creation of this dissertation, which determines its significant practical and applied contributions:

*1. The search for the manuscripts of the unpublished suites and the digitalization of the musical scores.* The enormous work invested in this regard has not only ensured the musical examples to be analyzed, but has certainly played a significant role in understanding the details of the composer's technique by transcribing the scores - let us remember that this method of unraveling the secrets of creativity was part of the teaching practice of many great musicians in the past.

*2. The conducted interviews with people who had artistic contacts with Kosta Kolev.* This "collection" (Appendix № 4) of shared memories and impressions of the composer's personality and

music, as well as of many facts, has a high coefficient of informativeness. It is extremely valuable for both current and future research on the history of preservation, processing, concert and media presentation and distribution of folk music.

3. *The descriptions of score editions and audio recordings*, which have a direct impact on the dissertation text, especially in the chapter dedicated to the so-called "instrumental-song suites".

4. *The systematization of data scattered in many publications about Kosta Kolev and the history of the orchestra of folk instruments*.

The dissertation consists of 154 pages of main text, bibliography, including 106 sources, Appendices. The work is structured in introduction, three chapters and conclusion. The second and third chapters contain the main analytical observations, while having an additional content load, originally carried out on a mirror principle: at the beginning of the second chapter the methodology and terminological system of the research are presented, and at the end of the third chapter is generated a theoretical model of K. Kolev's style in his music for orchestra of folk instruments.

The subject of the dissertation - the suites for orchestra of folk instruments by Kosta Kolev – has been constituted, and the reasons for its significance and relevance are convincingly presented by the author. A unifying factor is the genre "suite", which determines all other arguments: the developed form and dramaturgy; scope of musical material from different folklore regions; representativeness and connection with the overall work of the composer through the integration of songs arranged by K. Kolev for famous folk singers. Thus, the subject declares its basic role in relation to the research subject - it generously provides the opportunity to derive from it key characteristics of the author's creative style, called by Georgi Andreev (see Appendix № 4) "the style of the folk orchestra" and "first brick" in the cultural construction, which has become an emblem of one of the modern practices of orchestral music making in our country.

In order to undertake his analytical work on the works, Nikolay Gurbanov proposes their classification into two large groups: *instrumental-dance*, which are based mainly on dance melodies with instrumental nature, and *instrumental-song*, built on thematic material representing the melodies of folk songs. This classification is completely justified, as it concerns both the type of melodic material (instrumental - vocal) and the type of structuring – musical phrase (*knee*) and, respectively, strophic. The nature of the melodic material determines the specifics of harmony, texture, orchestration and allows the composer's approaches to be explored and summarized on the basis of a secondary genre-differentiated characteristic along the line dance – song.

Nikolay Gurbanov's dissertation contains a very significant contribution, which should be highlighted in the first place, as it is directly related to the analytical work on the research subject. I will define this achievement by the young author as *a model theoretical approach in terms of methodological and terminological basis of the research*. The relevant texts of the dissertation are formed in an article accepted for publication in the yet another "terminological" issue of the journal "Bulgarian Musicology". The very idea of the journal (now a tradition), to periodically review the

complex state of modern terminology has a very serious reason: in recent decades, musical terminology, on the one hand, is dynamically updated, and on the other, semantically stratified due to overload even the most popular musical terms with meanings that come from different schools or from the "mass" use of these terms on historically later styles compared to the time of their affirmation with their classical meaning. *That is why the requirement for specified and substantiated by an author terminology today exceeds in importance the basic requirement for a systematic terminological apparatus.* Nikolay Gurbanov is very clearly aware and very precisely addresses the additional problem arising from his research subject - "... music, which, on the one hand, preserves the national and regional specifics of the folklore prototype, and on the other hand, works with the means of professional European-style music culture". I fully share the following statement of the author: "The artistic synthesis, which has different characteristics in different composers, does not presuppose, however, the automatic generation of a corresponding terminological synthesis. There are many reasons - both in the individuality of the musical works and in the "hardness" of the terms, which carry the weight of the whole theoretical system in which they are "forged". This requires flexibility and adequacy of the approaches with which the researcher "adjusts" his conceptual apparatus in order to enter the world of a specific musical phenomenon." (p. 54)

Nikolay Gurbanov has brilliantly coped with the responsible and difficult task for a young researcher to unite and clearly outline the boundaries of the use of terminology, which comes from two different independent systems - the theory of Bulgarian musical folklore and the theory of classical professional music. I will immediately make an important reservation: in this generalized assessment I am referring to the author's approach to the problem, and not only (and not so much) its specific solutions. The theoretical justification adopted by Gurbanov (passed through a triple check: initial empirical – theoretical – confirmatory empirical) can be accepted or rejected by future researchers, may reveal its productivity in relation to other styles, or may not receive such a *resonance. But in any case, any future researcher can use as a model the methodology itself for building a synthetic terminological basis with author's argumentation about the choice of each theoretical category and the possibilities for its integration into a system.* I congratulate the author and the supervisor Prof. Dr. K. Buradzhiev for this extremely significant contribution of the dissertation research!

As for the specific solutions found and proposed by Nikolay Gurbanov, I find that they are extremely successful. I will especially highlight: the substantiated synthesis between the structure based on musical-phrase and the classical shaping; the updating of the term modal tonality, which gives a chance to trace the modal and tonal dramaturgy of the works; the definition and formalization of the phenomena modal modulation, mutation, mobility; the refinement of the texture terms on the basis of the cited work of Bozhidar Abrashev.

In the second and third chapters the author offers a complete analysis of 16 suites by Kosta Kolev, supplemented by highly informative schemes of structure and modal-tone unfolding. The

analysis of each suite is preceded by information on the time and reason for its creation, as well as by the characteristics of the melodic material. Of particular value (as already pointed out) is the researched song material in the second type of suites, as well as the prominent regional characteristics of the respective dance melodies. The introduced formalization clearly traces the modal and tonal dramaturgy, the composer's mastery in constructing a composition in formal and phonetic terms. The periodically introduced generalizations accumulate the gradually emerging typical creative approaches, which at the end of the dissertation become the basis for deriving a "theoretical model" (item 3.4) of the composer's style. It is built on the logic of various components of musical language and its logical organization: orchestration - texture - harmony - structure.

The author of the dissertation Nikolay Gurbanov has strong qualities for the development of research activity. He has the ability to successfully apply the methods of systematization, classification, analysis, interpretation, comparison, synthesis. He knows the basic literature in the field in which he works. I am especially happy with the references to such significant works of Bulgarian musicology as the works of Stoyan Dzhudzhev, the studies of Svetla Abrasheva, Iskra Racheva, the contemporary ethnomusicologists Lozanka Peycheva, Ventsislav Dimov, Goritsa Naidenova, the classical works in the field of music theory, the researchers of the Orchestra of Bulgarian folk instruments such as Bozhidar Abrashev, Milcho Vassilev and others. This is a statement for a future development.

I believe that the research should be published as a monograph. If the author takes such an initiative, I would recommend: 1) to consider more carefully the relationship texture - orchestration and 2) to include in the text more actively the observations expressed in the interviews of Appendix № 4 on the creative approaches and stylistic characteristics in the music of Kosta Kolev.

**In conclusion, I give my full professional support and convincingly propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Nikolay Stefanov Gurbanov the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".**

09.09.2021

Reviewer:

(Prof. Mariana Buleva, DSc)