

OPINION

by Prof. Vladimir Vladimirov, PhD

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

regarding the competition for the academic position of

Associate Professor in the professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Arts,

Major: Folk Choir Conducting

for the needs of the Department of Musical Folklore

at the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography

at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev* Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts - Plovdiv

In the announced competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the major: Folk Choir Conducting, the sole candidate is Senior Assistant Professor Nikolay Stefanov Gurbanov, PhD, a faculty member at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev* Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts - Plovdiv, Department of Music Folklore. He has submitted all the required documentation in accordance with the provisions of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, its Implementing Regulations, and the Regulations on the Terms and Conditions for the Award of Academic Degrees and the Appointment to Academic Positions at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev* Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts - Plovdiv. The Review Committee was appointed by Order No. RD-27-090/09.04.2026 of the Rector of the Academy.

The biographical statement submitted by Nikolay Gurbanov demonstrates substantial scholarly and artistic achievements that correspond closely to the profile of the announced competition. The candidate was born in Varna, where he completed his secondary music education. He subsequently obtained the degrees of Master and Doctor (PhD) at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev* Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts - Plovdiv. In 2017, he joined the Academy initially as a part-time lecturer, and in 2020 he was appointed as a full-time Assistant Professor. Since 2023, he has served as conductor of the Academic Folk Choir, with which he has given more than thirty concerts throughout Bulgaria over the course of two years, including concert tours in Spain and Japan with the internationally renowned

violinist Vasko Vassilev. Gurbanov has also distinguished himself through his public engagement as Chair of the Bulgarian National Youth Folklore Association.

The materials submitted by the candidate for the competition substantially exceed the minimum scientometric requirements established for the respective evaluation indicators:

- **Group A:** 50 points;
- **Group B:** 450 points (minimum required: 100);
- **Group Γ:** 490 points (minimum required: 120);
- **Group Д:** 80 points (minimum required: 40);
- **Group E:** 10 points (minimum required: 50).

The candidate was awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD) for his dissertation entitled *The Suites of Kosta Kolev for the Orchestra of Bulgarian Folk Instruments*, which was subsequently published as a monograph. This study represents a timely and significant contribution to the field of Bulgarian folk orchestral music. Among its principal contributions are: the development of a theoretical model of Kosta Kolev's compositional style in his works for the orchestra of Bulgarian folk instruments; the establishment of a terminological framework for the analysis of his compositions; and the identification and documentation of the original folk song sources and their performers for the melodies incorporated into the suites of the instrumental-song type within Kosta Kolev's oeuvre.

As part of the habilitation submission, the candidate presents two solo music albums (*Obayanie (Charm)*, 2019, and *Songs for Soloists*, 2026), in which he serves as arranger, producer, and conductor, as well as ten leading artistic performances. The two compact discs are valuable musical products that present Gurbanov as a skilled and well-prepared contemporary folk music creator with a distinctive artistic style. Regarding the ten leading performances listed in the scientometric table, I am unable to provide a fully substantiated qualitative assessment, as they are documented solely through event posters. No video recordings or reviews available online could be identified for these events; therefore, they can be evaluated quantitatively, but not in terms of their actual artistic value. The only exception is performance No. 5.1, for which available video material demonstrates a high level of performance quality of the vocal ensemble conducted by Gurbanov. It is likely that the double album of the Academic Folk Choir (*With Respect*, 2025), representing a

significant artistic achievement of the candidate, should have also been included in this section - an omission that cannot be readily explained.

In Group 'Г', the candidate presents a substantial body of scholarly output, among which the article *Artistic Perspectives in the Conducting Interpretation of Works for Women's Folk Choir* stands out. It is published in a specialized journal indexed in a global database - Web of Science. In Group 'Г', Item 9 lists eight articles published in specialized journals in the field of arts (it was noted that publication No. 8 has also been submitted as part of Nikolay Gurbanov's doctoral dissertation). The eight citations reported under Indicator 'D' indicate that Gurbanov's ethnomusicological contributions have generated a certain level of interest within the professional community. The author's self-assessment of the scientific contributions of the publications and citations is both accurate and substantive. It also includes two publications - a monograph and a book - that are not reflected in the scientometric table.

Alongside his scholarly and arranging activity, Mr Gurbanov has also demonstrated significant artistic engagement as conductor of the Academic Folk Choir, with more than twenty concerts from 2023 to the present, both in Bulgaria and abroad. To the best of my knowledge, he also has supporting artistic appearances as a soloist with the ensemble *Bulgare*, which are not reflected in the submitted documentation.

Nikolay Gurbanov's teaching and pedagogical activity is in a coherent interrelationship with his scholarly and artistic interests. Since 2017, he has been actively involved in the educational process in the major: Conducting Folk Ensembles, where his first graduated students have already begun their professional careers. It is also important to note the candidate's engagement in leading masterclasses in Bulgaria and abroad, where he presents contemporary approaches to artistic work with women's folk choirs.

In conclusion, I would like to state that Nikolay Gurbanov convincingly establishes himself as a professional with a clearly recognizable public, scholarly, and artistic profile. Based on my direct impressions dating back to his student years, I believe that he has the potential to establish himself as one of the authoritative figures in contemporary Bulgarian folk music art.

Based on the foregoing, I hereby give my positive evaluation of the candidate in the present competition - Nikolay Stefanov Gurbanov, PhD. I propose that the esteemed Academic Jury support his election to the academic position of Associate Professor in the

major: Folk Choir Conducting, within the professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, and recommend that the Faculty Council approve his appointment.

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Prof. Vladimir Vladimirov, PhD