

## **REVIEW**

by Prof Zhan Stefanov Pehlivanov  
AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" Plovdiv  
for the documents submitted by  
**Kristian Antoniev Zhelev**

in connection with a competition for awarding an educational and scientific degree "**doctor**" in a professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy, Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Art of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv.

Dissertation topic *Interplay between styles and approaches in drumming in popular and jazz music*  
Academic supervisor: **Veselin Koychev**

On the basis of Article 32, paragraph 1 of the Regulation on the implementation of the Development of the Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgari Act, and decision of the Faculty Council at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy /Protocol No. 1 dated 04/17/2024/

### **General presentation of the procedure:**

Kristian Antoniev Zhelev is the only candidate who has submitted documents for this competition. The documents and materials presented by him meet the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgari Act and the Regulation for its implementation, as well as the Rules for the conditions and procedures for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv.

The doctoral student has presented the following materials: creative autobiography, dissertation work, abstract, list of publications on the topic of the dissertation work. A detailed list of the 6 artistic concerts held related to the performing part of the doctoral studies. Appendixes.

### **Biographical data for the candidate:**

Kristian Antoniev Zhelev is born in Kardzhali. He completed his secondary education in a class with intensive music studies – majoring in piano at the "Cyril and Methodius" School, Plovdiv, after which he continued his higher music education. In 2013 he obtained his Bachelor's degree at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" Plovdiv, in the Department of Jazz and Pop Performing Arts with a special instrument piano with teacher Miroslav Turiyski.

As a student, he participated in a number of concerts included in the artistic creative calendar of the city of Plovdiv and the Academy, touring in the most diverse formations as a pianist and drummer.

In 2015 he obtained Master's degree again in AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" performance art Pop and Jazz, this time with a specialty Percussion Instruments in the class of Ivan Enev.

The active concert activity of the doctoral student does not stop. He participates in concert programs throughout the country and proved himself as a responsible concert instrumentalist and professional.

The presented artistic biographical reference includes his participation in the musicals *Maria from Buenos Aires*, *Jesus Christ Super Star*, *Evita*, *Company*, *Law of the Jungle* - productions of the State Opera Plovdiv.

Impressive are the candidate's performances in projects and jazz festivals: Katara European Jazz Festival (Doha) with Vasil Petrov; Novi Sad Jazz Fest (Serbia) with Karageorgiev Quintet, Jazz' Bone Festival (France) with Maggie Alexieva – May, Plovdiv Jazz Fest with Octet Plovdiv, Bansko Jazz Fest and Apolonia with Octet Plovdiv and The Teachers, Sofia Summer Fest with The Legends titled *A Song for Annie*.

He also took an active part in the recording of albums: *Sonata '57* and *Monday morning* - Milcho Leviev, " - Magi Aleksieva - May, The Teachers Project - Koychev and Nedyalkov, *Adventure* - Octet Plovdiv, *I Will Be* - Georgi Hristov Tribute, *The Trinketeer* - Dimitar Blagoev, *Possibilities* - Kristian Zhelev and Hristo Minchev, as well as numerous club performances, concerts, tours and collaborations with many of the big names of the Bulgarian music scene.

In some of the albums, he appears as the author of the music and at the same time a sound engineer, personally mastering the final product.

He wrote the music for Rozita Elenova's film *Free, Freer, Dimitar*.

For a certain period of time, he was the leading drummer of Big Band Plovdiv.

In addition to his busy career as an artist, Kristian Zhelev decided to devote himself to scientific research and in 2017 he won a competition and was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv.

In the competition, the doctoral student participates with a doctoral thesis. Along with the specified required concerts, he has submits a dissertation consisting of 128 pages. 57 titles of the used literature, of which 3 sources are in Bulgarian, 54 in a foreign language and 4 internet addresses. The topic of his work is interesting, unusual and researchable, closely related to his performance practice. The dissertation consists of: introduction, three chapters, conclusion, contributions, bibliography, scientific publications on the topic, reference to the concerts related to the performing part of the doctoral studies. Particularly interesting is the fourth concert, in which the entire program is originally composed by the doctoral student. Appendixes are also included.

#### **Description and evaluation of the dissertation work and the contributions:**

The **object, subject, purpose and tasks** of the research are described in detail in the **introduction**. The thesis of the research proves a connection between the different styles of the popular and jazz music and the appropriate approaches and ways of playing drums in a music band. The research methodology includes methods of analysis and synthesis of information and literature regarding the specific issue. An important role is played by the empirical research method, which is used to collect and substantiate knowledge through the means of direct or indirect observation. The **relevance of the study** is determined by the lack of in-depth research to present the approaches in playing drums in popular music. It is manifested in a scientific-theoretical and practical-applied aspect, examining and justifying in detail the specifics and characteristic features of playing drums in pop and jazz music.

In the **first chapter** of the dissertation, the author outlines historical moments in the formation and improvement of the modern drum set, and discusses the cultural mixing, which resulted in the appearance of individual styles in jazz. The emergence of African-American music in the United States, its stylistic African roots and the influence of the European culture on it are examined. Blues, Ragtime, Gospel, Cuban influence and Latin Jazz. The inclusion of the drums, and generally percussion instruments, in these styles is considered.

In the **second chapter**, the author describes the specifics of setting up a set of drums, the different materials for making the drums and their characteristic features related to sound. He presents different approaches to playing the drums and discusses rudimentary and linear playing. He also includes standardized rhythmic figures with specific left and right hand alternation. The harmonic rhythm, which refers to the rate at which the chords change in a musical composition, is analyzed. Rhythm - which serves composers as a dynamic tool to create nuanced narratives. Zhelev also covers the technique of melody mirroring, which means that the drummer duplicates the exact rhythmic and dynamic placement of the notes, thereby effectively playing the rhythmic skeleton of the melody without playing the notes themselves. Greater emphasis is placed on the importance of improvisation in the melodic drumming. He concludes: *“Drummers who are aware of the melodic and harmonic movements in a musical composition have a huge advantage”*.

In the **third chapter**, the author examines and analyzes the interplay between different styles: starting from the beginnings of early jazz, passing through swing and the big band orchestras, and ending with the latest styles of modern jazz. All this is presented through the drummer's point of view, which is directly related to the importance of his role and the drum performance in the different styles. Zhelev also mentions the evolution of the drummers of all the listed styles, which is related to the development of their technical capabilities, the complexity of the rhythms and measures in which they play, as well as their ability to be soloists and band leaders.

The **abstract** is 50 pages and gives a clear idea of the content, object, subject, tasks and research tools of the dissertation work. It fully presents the dissertation.

**I generally accept the contributions** listed by the candidate in the dissertation work and its **benefits - musicological and practical.**

**Contributions:**

- ✓ The work presents social and cultural features in the emergence, development and improvement of the modern drum set.
- ✓ It describes the main styles in jazz and their characteristic and specifics.
- ✓ In a practical-applied aspect, it shows the importance of tuning the drum set, depending on the interpretation of the different styles.
- ✓ The interplay between the styles and the used approaches to drumming is explained.
- ✓ The work emphasizes the importance of the drummer in a musical band and the approaches to drumming in the various styles of popular and jazz music.
- ✓ A contribution to the musical literature in Bulgaria is the section on the so-called *melodic drumming*. Both theoretical and practical techniques for its implementation are illustrated.

The **conclusion** summarizes the extensive research done regarding the interplay between styles and approaches in popular music drumming. The main highlights of the overall work are outlined, the achieved results are indicated and the main conclusions are drawn. In connection with the achievement of the set goal, the author shares and proves the thesis of the present study that "*there is a relation between the different styles of popular and jazz music and the approaches of playing drums in a music band. Reflecting and observing the regularities when making music inevitably leads to successful and exciting musical results*".

The author presents **3 scientific publications** on the topic of the dissertation, which are closely related to his work as a drummer in the field of pop and jazz music:

- ✓ *Formation of the modern drum set through the main styles in jazz.*
- ✓ *Melodic Drumming.*
- ✓ *On some harmonic and melodic approaches and scales in jazz music.*

The theoretical research of the candidate has practical applicability and is oriented towards both academic and artistic work. This determines the contribution character of the dissertation.

**I accept and admire** the artistic work of Kristian Zhelev, which is a major part of the whole procedure and is proven by the performance of 6 stylistically different and important concerts. I note that the program of the fourth concert is entirely original music composed by him.

**In conclusion**, I would like to congratulate the doctoral student and his supervisor - **Prof Veselin Koychev** for the rich dissertation work and the high level of its future beneficial effect. This dissertation can be used as a reference by many students studying Pop and Jazz Performance, majoring in percussion. I believe that the theoretical development meets the requirements for the acquisition of

the educational and scientific degree "**doctor**" presented by DASRBA and the Regulations for its implementation.

**Considering the cited rich, high-level artistic and creative work, I give my positive assessment and express my confident proposal to the respected academic jury for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy, Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Art, to **Kristian Antoniev Zhelev** for the needs of AMDFA "Prof. Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv.**

Date: 15.05.2024

Assoc. Prof Zhan Pehlivanov