

## OPINION

by Assoc. Prof Eduard Sarfyan

on a dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art, doctoral program

Music Studies and Music Art with author

**Kristian Antoniev Zhelev**

dissertation title:

***Interplay between styles and approaches in drumming in popular and jazz music***

Academic supervisor: **Veselin Koychev**

In 2008 the candidate he completed secondary education in a class with intensive music studies - majoring in piano at "Cyril and Methodius" Secondary School, Plovdiv. In 2013 he receives Bachelor's degree in performance art - Pop and Jazz Piano at AMDFA, in the class of Miroslav Turiyski, and in 2015 he obtained Master's degree in performance art Pop and Jazz percussion instruments at AMDFA, in the class of Ivan Enev. In 2017 he enrolled as a doctoral student at the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Art, with scientific supervisor Prof Veselin Koychev. Zhelev presents a rich artistic biographical reference, in which 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, participations in jazz festivals and music forums: 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 under the title *A Song for Annie*, participation in recordings of albums: *Sonata '57* and *Monday Morning* - Milcho Leviev, *Lost and Found* - Magi Aleksieva - Mei, 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 appearances, concerts, tours and collaborations with many of the big names of the Bulgarian music scene.

The dissertation presented by candidate consists of 128 pages. The cited literature includes 57 titles, of which 3 are in Bulgarian, 54 are in Latin and 4 are internet sources. The size of the dissertation is quite sufficient, given the fact that the specificity of Kristian Zhelev's doctoral studies is artistic. There is a reference to the 6 concerts and annotations to each of them.

The dissertation work is structured in a balanced way, containing introduction, three chapters, conclusion, contributions, appendices and used literature, and the bibliography contains titles by three Bulgarian and 54 foreign authors.

The object of the presented work, the subject of the research, as well as the goals and tasks are clearly presented.

Regarding the methodology of the research, it is striking that the presented thesis is based both on a study of specialized literature on the subject, and on personal executive experience and practical observations on the part of the author.

The relevance of the research is manifested in a scientific-theoretical and practical-applied aspect, by 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. Historically, the development of Gospel music and the inclusion of drums in this style is examined. The emergence of popular music in the USA, its stylistic roots and the influence of the European culture on it are mentioned. Zhelev also presents some facts about the popularization of jazz and pop music in Bulgaria.

In the **second chapter**, the author presents approaches to playing the drums. He describes the specifics of setting up the kit, the different materials used to make the drums and their characteristic sound-related features and discusses rudimentary and linear playing. Another theme is harmonic 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.

In the **third chapter**, the author examines and analyzes the interaction between the different styles, which is directly dependent on the role of the drummer and the performing techniques for drums in the different styles. The evolution of drummers from Dixieland to fusion is touched upon, which is related to the development of their technical capabilities, the complexity of the rhythms and scales in which they play, and their ability to be soloists and band leaders.

#### **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 music 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.

Considering all of the above, I believe that the doctoral student Kristian Antoniev **Zhelev fully meets the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor"** in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art pursuant to the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria Act. I congratulate him and his scientific supervisor.

23.05.2024

Assoc. Prof Eduard Sarafyan, PhD