

REVIEW

by Prof Ventsislav Dimov (Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski";
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on dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3.

Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art at Department of Music

Folklore, AMDFA Prof Asen Diamandiev

Author: Peyo Trendafilov Peev

Title: *Gadulka – acoustic features and modern trends in its sound amplification*

Academic supervisor: Prof Todor Aleksandrov Kirov, PhD

1. General presentation of the procedure and the materials presented for review

The dissertation work *Gadulka – acoustic features and modern trends in its sound amplification* is part of the doctoral studies in the doctoral program Musicology and Musical Art at the Department of Musical Folklore, AMDFA Prof Asen Diamandiev - Plovdiv under the scientific guidance of the prominent researcher and Gadulka teacher of Prof Todor Kirov. The author Peyo Peev is a doctoral student (individual form of study) at the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, where he is an assistant (since 2020). He is discharged with the right of defense on 27.01.2022.

The artistic doctoral studies include 6 concerts (held between 2017 and 2021), which are presented with video documentation and described in the Fourth Chapter of the dissertation. They are the basis of Peev's work on the practical stage application of sound and electronic effects, the subject of his doctorate. The six concerts were performed with the formations Folk-Jazz Quintet, project Vira, Teodosiy Spasov Quintet, Teodosiy Spasov Trio, Folk Music Orchestra of Bulgarian National Radio, and Peev, Turiyski, Minchev, Gospodinov Quartet. The provided audio documentation for the materials also includes 20 audio samples, which are detailed and analyzed in a special section (Using Electronic Effects), part of the Third Chapter of the dissertation work - Sound recording and Amplification of Gadulka.

The textual part of the dissertation has a total volume of 115 pages, which include: main text (103 pages), bibliography (73 titles in 4 pages), appendices (6 pages: comparative graphics, links, list of audio examples). The theoretical part is structured in an introduction, four chapters: The Gadulka in the Past and Today, Acoustic Features of the Gadulka, Sound Recording and Amplification of the Gadulka, Practical Stage Use of sounding and electronic effects in the concerts in the concerts included in the artistic-creative work, and conclusion. The text contains illustrations (11 graphs and diagrams, 11 photos) and footnotes.

2 Brief biographical data of the candidate

Peyo Trendafilov Peev is born on 21.09.1975 in Stara Zagora. He made his first stage appearances with the children's and youth ensemble "Zagorche". In 1994, he graduated from National

School of Folklore Arts "Filip Kutev" – Kotel. The same year he is admitted at AMDFA Prof Asen Diamandiev – Plovdiv where he receives Bachelor's degree in Conducting Folk Ensembles (1999) and Master's degree in Performing Art (2017). He worked as an orchestrator at the National Folklore Ensemble "Filip Kutev" (1997-1999); since 2000 he has been a soloist-orchestrator, currently the leader of a group in the Folk Music Orchestra of the Bulgarian National Radio. Since 2017, he has been teaching at AMDFA Prof Asen Diamandiev, where he is an assistant (since 2020). I am familiar with his stage performances and recordings: in addition to the two largest and most popular "folk orchestras", with which he records and presents Bulgarian folk music, he has worked in ethno-jazz and world music groups with renowned Bulgarian artists, such as Teodosiy Spasov, Stoyan Yankulov, Petar Ralchev and others; he was part of world projects (Riverdance, Jordi Savall). He composed music for productions by the choreographers Vasil Gerlimov, Petar Iliev. He has participated in the recording of more than 40 albums in collaboration with musicians from different countries.

3. Relevance of the topic

The dissertation *Gadulka – acoustic features and modern trends in its sound amplification* is a contribution to the study of a topic that has become a major theme in the study of old folk music in the new times "between the Village and the Universe" (Lozanka Peycheva): the transformations that turn the local music of the tradition in global music of modern and postmodern times. Peyo Peev fits his "Gadulka case" successfully into the panoramic picture of the transformations of the Bulgarian traditional music, continuing Todor Kirov's pioneering studies on the evolution of the Gadulka. Peev chooses the topic of innovations in Gadulka performance, related to modern methods of sound amplification, the technologies that musicians use in the contexts of modern concert and sound recording – an original research field, the focus of the research is acoustic features, sound recording methods and the amplification of Gadulka in different acoustic environments. Among the contributions of the work are both the relevant topic and position of the researcher directly participating in his own observation, a part of the studied stage and studio "laboratories" for experimentation.

4. Expediency of the research methods used to achieve the set goals

Peev defines the goal of his dissertation work as analyzing and researching the acoustics of the instrument, possible ways of its development, systematizing various practices for sound recording and voicing the Gadulka (p. 6). This goal determines the specific research tasks: study of the traditional Gadulka, tracing the changes in its structure, the role of microphones, sound recording, electronic musical effects to improve and achieve new performance possibilities and directions in stage and studio work. Appropriate methods and tools are applied in relation to the research objectives and tasks. They are not quite precisely formulated (the author generally defines them as "observation", "comparison", "analysis and synthesis" - see p. 7). The observation used in the work is not the accepted "observation without the intervention of the researcher", but as a form of included observation - the author describes and analyzes himself and his own experience and practice, and this

is one of the advantages of the work. The interview, listed as a method, is not systematically applied, or if it is, it is not brought out (I found a trace of it only on pp. 38-39 of the work, where there is a note "From an interview with Deyan Denchev, conducted on 30.08.2020). Peev is right when he points out that among the methods used are comparison, demonstration and interpretation – in my opinion, it is precisely the synthesis of these tools that is the main contribution of his dissertation work as an artistic-creative doctoral study: knowing "from inside" various traditional and modernized versions of the Gadulka, Peev shows skill in comparing their capabilities, demonstrates the role of the microphone and electronic technologies, interprets his own performances to bring out his ideas in analytical (the theoretical text part) and artistic (concerts) work.

Contributions and significance of the thesis and the publications on the topic of the dissertation

The self-referenced contributions of the work are in several directions, denoted by the epithet "first": tracing of the development of Gadulka performance art in the last three decades; an attempt to investigate the basic acoustic properties of the Gadulka, to explain scientifically the sound formation, sound shaping and propagation of the sound of the Gadulka; theoretical-practical experience to derive guidelines for sound recording of Gadulka – the use of different types of microphones, positioning relative to them, methods and techniques of the performer; introduction of methods that are mastered and verified with long practice for voicing the Gadulka in a different acoustic environment; describe and demonstrate the influence of different types of electronic music effects on the Gadulka sound; readings of the sound recording and voicing strategy in different acoustic environments by an active instrumentalist, which determines the credibility of the conclusions; an acoustic comparison between modern professional performers and the innovations of the luthier Deyan Denchev and his improved version of the Gadulka. I will emphasize that Peev realistically evaluates the contributions of his own artistic and creative work, the specificity of which is to prove his own scientific hypotheses by describing concert "experiments".

Two publications are presented on the topic of the dissertation: *The Gadulka on our Lands* (Collection of Spring Scientific Readings of AMDFA-Plovdiv, 2020) and *The leading role of microphones in the sound recording of gadulka* (E-journal, VSU-Varna, 2020/ issue 13). Both publications available on the internet, correspond to the topic of the dissertation.

6. Abstract

The abstract is 51 pages and corresponds to the content of the work.

7. Critical remarks and recommendations

I made some critical remarks related to the mentioned methodology in section 4 of this review. I recommend that the author put more effort into editing the work if he intends to publish it: there are technical and spelling errors (e.g. incorrect reduction of "o" - see "doctorate" in the table of contents; in one of the articles the personal and surname of the cited author have been changed - instead of Manol Todorov - Manolov, T.). If interviews were conducted during the research, they should be

entered correctly in the text and in the sources (e.g. one of the articles mentions interviews with Viktor Yordanov and Todor Chorbov, but they are not included in the text of both the article and the dissertation, where the interview is listed as one of the methods). There are inaccuracies and missing links to basic literature on the research questions, both in the sections describing the Gadulka in the Bulgarian tradition, and in the sections on the acoustic aspects of sound recording and technologies (e.g., *The Gadulka in Bulgaria*, referred to as a "book" on p. 17, is actually a study published in item 5 of the Bulletin of the Institute of Music; there are not enough sources on the international experience).

I have a question that came to me after the last concert of the Folk Music Orchestra of the Bulgarian National Radio (Rhythm of the Balkans, Bulgaria Hall, 2 June 2023). The emphasis in the concert section of the dissertation is on the Gadulka and its sound amplification in chamber formations (with the exception of the concert 5 with FMO of the BNR in the First Radio Studio). In one of the sentences in the text, the author expresses a sceptical opinion about the decision of the recorders to seek a pure acoustic environment without additional effects (p. 97). How, as a leader of a band in FMO, would you comment on your visions of recording the band of 6 Gadulkas - without or with additional effects, what effects, why?

8. Evaluation of the dissertation work

The author has expert and detailed knowledge of the researched problem, shares valuable personal experience, has the skills to analytically read foreign scientific contributions, has his own ideas, which he verifies in practice. The topic of the research is formulated clearly, the content of the paper corresponds to the title. The content and structure of the text correspond to the established norms. The obtained results are well-defined both in the artistic achievements shared in the concerts, and in the analytical part of the research.

9. Conclusion

Despite the remarks, I accept Peyo Trendafilov Peev's dissertation work *Gadulka – acoustic features and modern trends in its sound amplification* as complete. It meets the requirements of the Law on the development of the academic staff of Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation. This gives me reasons to give a positive assessment of the artistic and creative doctorate for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art, by giving a positive vote for awarding the scientific "Doctor" to Peyo Peev in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art. I hope that my colleagues of the scientific jury share this opinion.