

# REVIEW

By Prof. DSc Anna Topaldzhikova

Of the materials presented by Chief Assistant Dr. Roumyana Nikolova

For the competition for ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

I confirm that the materials, presented by Chief Assistant Dr. Roumyan Nikolova as evidence for her activities comply with all requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor.

Roumyana Nikolova's interest of the art of acting is permanent. She has dedicated reviews, articles, conference presentations and the book *Acting Training in the 20<sup>th</sup> century* which is an important contribution to Bulgarian theater studies. The book is also a source of knowledge in process of education of students. As a result of extensive research and analysis, Nikolova systematizes the ideas for the training practice of the great directors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its application, managing to bring out the essential and unique for each of them.

Dealing with the problems of acting, Roumyana Nikolova draws attention to the circumstances that create a favorable or crisis environment for the development of the theatrical processes. This stimulates the ambitious task of entering an unexplored area, namely the models of functioning of the Bulgarian theater depending on the political context. The result of the seriously proven interest in the above topics are her reports in various academic conferences, as well as her articles in specialized academic journals and collections.

In her next book "*Model of Functioning of the Bulgarian Theater in the Period 1944 - 1989*" Roumyana Nikolova focuses her attention at discovering the connection between the theatrical process and the socio-political context in which it is realized. The study focuses on the period 1944-1989, noted for the over-centralization of cultural management and in particular theater.

I respect this effort of Roumyana Nikolova to "fight" the unattractive matter (really in too large a volume) of laws, bills, ordinances, minutes of meetings, conferences, councils and to turn them into a well-structured account of the dependence between theater and state institutions for a long period of time, that is already history. Although it has remained history, the considered model of theatrical administration turns out to be useful for us as a material for research and topical reflection on unsuccessful decisions, unfinished endeavors, and unsolved problems.

Key contribution of the research is the detailed study and analysis of primary archival documents made for the first time in Bulgarian theater studies, which prove the influence of politics on the theatrical processes in our country during the period from

1944 to 1989. This builds the platform on which Roumyana Nikolova builds her ideas for the application of the new for its time theatrical model of management and control, exercised over the theater and the various processes and events that appear as a consequence and reaction in the specifics of political and cultural dependencies for the periods: 1944-1956, 1956-1968, 70s, 80s. The motives for the series of liberalizations and stagnations of the regime are analyzed in detail, as well as the very specifics of the relations between the government and the intelligentsia during the whole period of the totalitarian government.

An important achievement of her research is that it lays the contextual social, political and administrative basis of the processes in the Bulgarian theater in the period 1944 - 1989, which in fact until now was absent in its entirety. Roumyana Nikolova not only "reconstructs" this context, but through her analysis proves the importance of the conditions of the political situation both in the restraining and repressive role and as a provocation to the opposition reaction, as a result of which a new wave of creative theatrical processes and phenomena arises.

The study examines in detail the critical phenomena in the sphere of repertoire policy, ideologically imposed standards on Bulgarian dramaturgy and stage practice. Traces the administrative recommendations and sanctions that imposed by censorship practices. In the chapter "Breakthroughs in the normative aesthetics of theatrical socialist realism in the period 1956 - 1968" Roumyana Nikolova analyzes the emergence of new ideas in drama and directing that penetrate the Bulgarian scene, despite the restrictions. Thus, it complements the research of Bulgarian theater studies on these emblematic innovative phenomena with the detailed restoration of political and managerial provocations, their appearance and subsequent sanction, and hence for the lasting mark they leave in the history of our theater.

A key contribution of the academic research is also the achieved objective position, which simultaneously with the discovery of the ruthless practices, notes the importance of some fruitful ideas that have emerged during the years under consideration. The periodically held reviews of Bulgarian drama and theater, in addition to being a manifestation of strict censorship measures, are an incentive for creative pursuits of all theaters in the country, which show before a wide range of spectators and professionals their achievements. The innovative ideas for theatrical reforms in the second half of the 1980s are also noted, which unfortunately remained unrealized. The motives for the emergence of these transformations in the 1980s, influenced by the dynamically changing political situation in the world, including in the Socialist camp, which require a new approach and impose the need to modernize the theatrical process, are taken into account. This requires a rethinking of administrative and creative methods of work. Roumyana Nikolova analyzes in detail and gives her conclusions with topical significance in the chapter "Theater facing the need for reform in the 80s".

So, once again I will emphasize the pioneering nature of the research work, the topic has not been developed in such detail and in its entirety in the Bulgarian theater studies. Roumyana Nikolova's work is important with the accumulated knowledge and conclusions not only for future research in the field of theater, but also for future processes of constructive work on the theater model as a concept, organization and management.

Having in mind the merits of the academic work of Ch. Assistant Dr. Roumyana Nikolova and the habilitation materials submitted for the competition, I am confidently voting for her candidacy for the academic position of "Associate Professor".

April 21, 2020

Signature:

/ Anna Topaldzhikova /