

OPINION

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Competition for ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in academic specialty Theater Studies and Theater Art, professional direction 8.4 Theater and Film Art
Candidate Dr. Roumyana Nikolova, Chief Assistant at the Institute of Art Studies - BAS

During the years I have been following the academic and research activities of Dr. Nikolova as Chief Assistant at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences – Theater Department, where I have an academic position.

Roumyana Nikolova studied at the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (1989-1991). Takes her MA in Theater Studies in 1997 at NATFA "Krastio Sarafov". Acquires her academic degree Doctor of Theater Studies and Theater Art, again in NATFA in 2003. In 2008 she was awarded the Icarus Prize for Critical Text of the Union of Bulgarian Artists.

Nikolova worked as a dramaturge. She was a senior expert at the Ministry of Culture. Has been a guest lecturer at NATFA "Krastio Sarafov" since 2008. Since 2009 she has been a Chief Assistant at the Institute of Art Studies - BAS, Theater Department.

The presented materials cover the necessary academic indicators for acquiring the academic position of "Associate Professor". They are:

1. Habilitation work - published academic monograph "Model of Functioning of the Bulgarian Theater in the Period 1944-1989";
2. 1 article published in a publication, referenced and indexed in the Web of Science;
3. 1 article published in a publication referenced in ERIH PLUS;
4. 16 articles published in specialized publications in the field of arts;
5. List of citations - 10;
6. List of participation in projects and received awards.

The main habilitation work "Model of Functioning of the Bulgarian Theater in the Period 1944-1989" is structured according to the previously set goal: to study the main

trends and key events in the Bulgarian theater from 1944 to 1989, as Nikolova says from a "bird's eye view". The study is 288 pages.

The work has a clear structure and consists of preliminary notes, five chapters, concluding remarks. There are also applications, as well as a bibliography of the cited and used literature.

The first chapter is dedicated to the formation of a new theatrical model from 1944 to 1956. It includes a presentation of the model of management and control of the Bulgarian theater, the process of building a cultural administration, the Committee for Science, Art and Culture, the Repertoire bureau. Attention is also paid to the development of the theater network in Bulgaria during that period. The artistic model in theater and repertoire politics is also outlined. The "ideal" for a new Bulgarian drama is described. The problem of introducing socialist realism into stage practice is considered.

The second chapter analyzes the changing cultural policy in the period 1956-1968.

In the third chapter the object of study are the breakthroughs in the normative aesthetics of theatrical socialist realism in the period 1956–1968.

Chapters four and five focus on the attitudes for theatrical reforms in the 1970s, which in the 1980s confronted the theater with the need for reform.

The applications contain the texts of four important normative documents from the period: 1. Decisions of Committee for Science, Art and Culture on the situation of the provincial drama theater and measures for improvement of their work; 2. Instructions for the work of the theaters on popularization of the theater and the new productions, increase of the attendance and the incomes; 3. Conclusions of the Committee for Science, Art and Culture, the Union of Bulgarian Writers and the Union of Artists and Theater Workers from the first review of contemporary Bulgarian drama; 4. Decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party for the further development of the theatrical work in the country.

The bibliography lists 80 sources - monographs, collections, articles in academic journals and periodicals. 10 archival funds of the Central State Archive and over 100 archival documents were used.

Nikolova deals with larger problems without going into details, discussing in general terms the socio-political context in the sphere of culture during the period. In this case, the author cites large excerpts from documents.

The main contribution of the work is that Dr. Nikolova managed to construct a historical account of the management and the main trends in the theater from 1956 to 1989, relying mostly on collected and studied in detail archival documents from the time, a large part of which are from the Central State Archives. A tremendous work has been done, which deserves admiration.

As a result of following such a documentary-historical approach, a sufficiently objective picture is drawn of the mechanisms of control and development of the theater, of the repertoire policy, of the introduction of sustainable models, of the further establishment of the method of socialist realism as "the only right method of artistic creation".

Some theoretical analyzes have been made in the paper. The author adheres to the theses of contemporary researchers of the socialist theater in recent years. One is that in the 60's the model of relations between those in power and artists follows the one already established in previous years, but there is already an alternation of moments of "easing" ("relaxing") and "freezing" ("tightening"). Another thesis is that in the 60's the theater began to be renewed through the new dramatic works of authors who write mainly prose and poetry such as Ivan Peychev, Valeri Petrov, Stefan Tsanev, Ivan Radoev, Georgi Markov, Yordan Radichkov and others.

In my opinion, the chapters devoted to the cultural policies in the field of theatrical art in the 70s and 80s, which are based entirely on normative documents and programs, are of high cognitive value and contribution from a historiographical point of view. They extensively cite decisions of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party for the further development of theatrical work in the country, a plan-program prepared by an expert group in implementation of the decisions of the Politburo, minutes of meetings of the government formed in the early 70s "Theater" department at the Committee for Art and Culture, complex analyzes of CAC, the July concept for the reorganization of theatrical work, etc. The role of Lyudmila Zhivkova in the direction of new ideas for reforming culture is emphasized.

In addition, the texts of 23 academic articles from the general list of 52 publications are attached. They are devoted to various problems, mostly related to three main research fields: the training practices of the 20th c. in the art of acting, the theater of socialism and the problems and challenges facing the theater of the 21st century.

The following contributions have been highlighted, which in my opinion really play an important role in filling some of the "white fields" in Bulgarian theater culture and theater studies.

One of the merits of the work is that an attempt was made to outline a general model of the Bulgarian theater during the communist regime, presenting the main characteristics of this model imposed through the model of government (cultural administration, Committee for Science, Art and Culture, Repertoire bureau, theater network) and through the artistic model (repertoire policy, the new Bulgarian drama, stage practice);

An important focus is dedicated to the study of the problem of how the policies of the communist government affected the theater sector and what was their projection on the repertoire, on Bulgarian drama, performance, etc.

It should be noted as a positive quality that the text not only considers the imposition of socialist realism in stage practice as the only acceptable method of creativity, but also draws attention to phenomena in the theater sector that expanded the boundaries of the imposed model.

One of the most significant contributions of the work, however, as it has already been pointed out, is that it uses mainly primary archival documents, which trace the changes in the government's policy towards the theater and the reactions of the artists.

The work provides necessary and valuable information - a basis for future more detailed studies of the history of Bulgarian theater after the Second World War.

In view of the already stated prominent qualities of Dr. Romyana Nikolova as in the field of theatrical art, as well as the contributions to the materials submitted for habilitation, I give a positive assessment and without hesitation support her candidacy for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Theater Studies and Theater Art at the Institute of Art Studies - BAS.

April 21, 2020 Signature:

Prof. Dr. Joanna Spasova-Dikova