

OPINION

By Prof. Snezhina Tankovska

On the materials presented by

Chief Assistant Dr. ROUMYANA NIKOLOVA

Competition for the academic position Associate Professor

In Theater Studies and Theater Art (history of the Bulgarian theater)

Professional direction 8.4 Theater and Film Art

Chief Assistant Dr. Roumyana Nikolova is the only candidate for the announced by the Institute of Art Studies – BAS competition (*State Gazette* issue 3/10.01.2020). She has presented all the necessary documents and materials required by ZRAS.

Roumyana Nikolova has a diploma of higher education, Master of Theater Studies from the National Academy of Theater and Film Arts "Krastyo Sarafov", 1997. Since 2007 is Doctor of Theater Studies and Theater Arts with a successfully defended dissertation at the National Academy of Theater and Film Arts on the topic "Acting Training in the 20th century (Changes in the position of the actor in the performance in the 20th century)."

Since 2008 Chief Assistant Dr. Roumyana Nikolova is a guest lecturer at NATFA on the subjects "Preparation and development of a stage project", "History of Russian theater", "Acting training in the 20th century"

For this competition, the candidate presented the monograph "Model of Functioning of the Bulgarian Theater in the Period 1944 - 1989", Petko Venedikov Publishing House, Sofia, 2020, ISBN 978-619-7469-12-7, as well as a number of "articles and reports published in academic publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information" and "in specialized publications in the field of arts"(according to the requirements of the ZRAS).

Quite obvious is the researcher's motivation to study and "narrate" (according to her own definition) the Bulgarian theater in the period pointed out in the title.

This effort is supported and enriched by a large number of publications of articles and reports from participation in conferences and discussions within national and international forums (some of them presented as materials for participation in this competition). In the accompanying texts, Roumyana Nikolova methodically and consistently discusses the main characteristics of the Bulgarian theater as a social and cultural phenomenon. The synergy between the research work in the monograph and in the accompanying publications categorically supports and enriches the contributory nature of the texts proposed by the author.

The content of the main habilitation work is structured as follows: Preliminary remarks; Five chapters; Concluding remarks; Four applications; References and used literature. The monograph is provided with the necessary carefully selected and detailed array of information about the studied archival documents and used/cited literature.

At the beginning of the Preliminary Notes, Nikolova defines the title of the text and in particular the phrase "model of functioning" as the most general expression conceivable, which makes it possible to study the theater during the period of communism from the so-called "bird's eye view". (Monograph, p. 7) The cited explanation justifies the need for a brief introduction to the topic, sources and the period (such as boundaries and events). An important quality of Roumyana Nikolova's research work is the accurate selection and objective handling of the used "mainly primary documents" stored in the Central State Archives (CSA) as a basis for research on her topic, laid in a period of our recent history, which is still loaded with contradictory positions for assessments and conclusions. It is worth noting the ability of the author to arrange, analyze and comment on the vast material from archival documents, consistently determining the stages in establishing the new model of functioning of the Bulgarian theater after 1944.

Fundamental to the overall content of the monograph is Chapter One. Formation of a New Theatrical Model 1944 - 1956. It is no coincidence that it occupies the first half of the overall volume of the work and is necessarily divided into two parts: Model of Management and Control of the Bulgarian Theater (cultural administration, KNIK, repertoire bureau, theater network) and Art Model (repertoire policy, new Bulgarian drama, introduction of socialist realism in stage practice). This chapter outlines the main contributing characteristics of the work, which are to be developed in more detail in the analysis of the next periods and event stages in the process that are to be established and dominating the theatrical model until 1989.

The content of the work in the next two chapters is developed in the already stated direction of the study, with a focus on the period 1956 - 1968 and the following topics: Chapter two. The Changing Cultural Policy in the Period 1956-1968 and Chapter Three. Breakthroughs in the Normative Aesthetics of Socialist Realism in the Theater in the Period 1956 - 1968. In this part of the monograph Roumyana Nikolova continues to work with archival documents. Extremely useful for the purpose of the research is the methodology proposed by the author, substantiated in the Preliminary Notes (p. 8), where the archival materials are defined as evidence of the "highly ideological communist historiography" used in the service of party propaganda in the period 1944-1989 and the dominant approach in them to turn the events of a given period into borderline was applied after 1989. That is why the author continues: "The modern and adequate point of view is *"to highlight the years of resistance against the system throughout the socialist camp - especially the Hungarian events in 1956, the Czech ones in 1968, the Polish in 1980"* (Yordanov, N. *On the periodization of the*

history of the Bulgarian theater: Art Studies Readings, Institute of Art Studies, Sofia, 2010, p.39)" (Monograph, p. 8). Thus Roumyana Nikolova substantiates the need to apply a methodology in the research on the topic, which combines the two points of view and makes it possible to create a profile of the Bulgarian theater as a function of the dominant party policy and the accompanying attempts of creative circles "gradually, without extreme gestures (to) reformulate the limits of admissibility, but without "outbursts" outside socialist realism"(Monograph, p. 180). This part of the work is necessary and valuable not only because it accurately outlines the specifics of the theatrical model, but also by discussing processes of resistance against it, insofar as they exist as attempts to break the aesthetics of socialist realism. Towards the end of 1956, the Bulgarian theater was reformed with the introduction of the new model of state centralized government. The subordination of the theater to communist ideology in order to elevate its social and educational role inevitably turns it into a means of propagating party ideas. Political events and relevant party forums in 1956 forced the government to make some changes such as controlled liberalization of cultural policy, ready to immediately fend off and limit any signals of a more radical change in the model of theater management as part of cultural life the country. However, during this period there were "breakthroughs in the normative aesthetics of theatrical socialist realism" - the creation of the Theater of Satire, the short life of the Bourgas Group, the tangible entry of new directors into theatrical practice - phenomena that the author highlights as an expression of change. However, at the end of the period 1956–1968, the feeling of frustrated hopes and incomplete attempts of the theatrical community to overcome the stagnation that always follows the brief impulses to change the model remained. This dominant attitude is a bridge to the main theme in the last two chapters of the monograph.

Chapter four. The 1970s: Moods for Theater Reform and Chapter Five. The Theater in the Need for Reform in the 1980s. The unifying position of the author on what happened in the two decades before 1989 is about the presence of more tangible manifestations of the spirit for reforming the theatrical model, defined as "mood" in the 70's, and in the 80's - as "necessity". The intention for change remained unrealized until the end of 1989. The last two chapters contain essential elements of the monographic work, which support its contribution not only as the first study of its kind on the proposed topic, but also one, which by default makes it necessary to study the next period - from 1989 to the present. The coherent structure of the monograph is the result of the exact placement of accents in the text, which speak of the need for change or implicitly contain intentions for failed acts of resistance against the status quo. This presupposes material for hypotheses about the specific difficulties that mark the search for the new model of the Bulgarian theater on its path of attempts for reforms after 1989. A search that still continues.

Roumyana Nikolova finalizes the Concluding Notes in the monograph as follows: "The methodology chosen in this work recounts the period through the main trends

and key events, supported by specific examples. A detailed narrative would include a much more systematic and detailed presentation of the short narratives of individual texts, performances, artists..." (p. 258). These lines testify to the professional ethics of the author, who as a serious researcher uses the tools of objective scientific research, but as a member of the Bulgarian theater community, does not remain impartial to the state and prospects for the development of cultural processes in our country.

I am firmly convinced of the usefulness of the research work proposed by Roumyana Nikolova as a personal achievement with serious cognitive value. The monograph and the presented accompanying texts can be used as material, supporting in teaching-methodical and practical-applied plan the teaching of aspects of the history of the Bulgarian theater in various educational programs.

My personal impressions of the candidate as a member of the academic community at NATFA "Krastyo Sarafov" are positive.

Based on the above, I strongly recommend to the academic jury to award Dr. Roumyana Nikolova the academic position of "Associate Professor".

I vote YES.

22.05.2020

Prof. Snezhina Tankovska