

REVIEW

On the competition for acquiring the academic position *Associate Professor* in music studies and music art (history of popular music), professional direction 8.3 *Music and Dance Art*, published in State Gazette issue 65/12.08.2022

by the Institute of Art Studies, BAS

With candidate Senior Assistant Dr Mihail Todorov Lukanov

by Prof. Dr Ivanka Vlaeva

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In the announced competition participated one candidate – assist. Prof. Dr. Mihail Todorov Lukanov. The documentation for the competition is complete and complies with the requirements of the ADASRB. The presented activities meet the minimum national scientometric for the academic position of Associate Professor.

Assistant Professor Dr. Mikhail Todorov Lukanov is a musician with many years of experience in the field of musical art. He completed his secondary education at the Lyubomir Pipkov Academy of Performing Arts, majoring in double bass. Studied Composition at NMA "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov" (1989-1994). After that he graduated with a master's degree at the St. Kliment Ohridski University, from the Faculty of Classical and New Philology. There he gained qualifications as a secondary school English teacher (2002-2004) and a translator-editor (2004-2005). Lukanov received his PhD in 2012 in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art. He works as a lecturer in English and since 2013 as a senior assistant professor in the Music Department of the Institute of Art Studies - BAS. He is the author of music and choral arrangements. Has received awards for his choral works in several national competitions. Member of the Union of Bulgarian Composers.

For the current competition, Mihail Lukanov presents research, publication, and project activities. A) Dissertation "Convention and innovation in Bulgarian rock music: on the experience of Studio Balkanton" to receive his PhD B) Habilitation thesis "Music in the arena of the Bulgarian circus", *De Artibus Monographiae № II*, Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2020, 200 p. D) Published 1 edition based on the defended dissertation for the Doctor's degree - "Convention and innovation in Bulgarian rock music: on the experience of the FSB", Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2018, 150 p.; 6 articles published in specialized journals; 1 monograph "Miljo Bassan - Life and Art", Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2017, 132 p. E) Citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review - 10. F) Participation in scientific and educational projects - 2 national, 1 international. Has 3 awards for vocal music from national competitions. The above publications, citations and

activities meet the minimum national scientometric indicators for the academic position of Associate Professor.

Mihail Lukanov's musical experience and the skills mentioned above are a very good basis for his academic interests. He has chosen for his research an important topic that is related to the field of the announced competition - the history of popular music. The topics are new and important. They present processes, events and personalities that have not been examined comprehensively before. It is very valuable that in this way knowledge about music in the entertainment culture of Bulgaria from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1980s is preserved and systematized. Mihail Lukanov's main contributions are related to the study of music in the Bulgarian circus, the presentation of some significant personalities in Bulgarian popular music, the analysis of the notions of authorship and creativity in popular music, and its specificities.

I will elaborate on Mihail Lukanov's habilitation thesis, because it includes the other research areas presented in the competition materials. This is also the research with the most contributory character. The monograph *Music at the Bulgarian Circuses* presents the topic of the place and varieties of music used in Bulgarian circus art. The monograph consists of 200 pages - 128 pages of which are the main text. The book has an introduction, seven chapters, a conclusion, eight appendices (interviews with some of the respondents) and a bibliography. Print and electronic sources in Latin and Cyrillic have been used. Images and music examples are included.

The introduction presents the relevance and necessity of the study of the circus as a specific mediator of musical manifestations. Its role in the establishment and development of popular music in Bulgaria is pointed out. The object, subject, aim, tasks, and methodology of the research are clearly and precisely formulated. It is stated that the aim of the study is to show historically characteristic musical performances, personalities and performing ensembles of the circus scene in Bulgaria, as well as to make conclusions about their place and importance in Bulgarian culture.

Chapter One, "Circus and Music," presents characteristics of the contemporary circus and its musical component. It analyses the functions of music at different moments before and in circus performances. It points out musical genres (the so-called circus march, polka, gallop, foxtrot, etc.) that are related to specific features of certain numbers in circus programs. The range of frequently used musical repertoire is outlined, from dance and jazz standards to symphonic, operatic and operetta music. This reveals different patterns of authorial thinking and corresponding solutions that are in tune with the chosen circus numbers. One of the peculiarities of Bulgarian programs is noted - the inclusion of folk music and dance ensembles.

Chapter Two presents "Some Bulgarian Circuses". The beginning and development of circus art in Bulgaria is historically traced. An overview is given of important tours of foreign circuses, as well as the emergence and transformations of Bulgarian troupes. The emphasis is on music. Special attention is paid to musical clowning, the role of the so-called puppeteers and virtuoso instrumentalists. The development of

orchestras (e.g., the establishment of the big band in circus performances), complete productions and choreographies are examined.

The third chapter presents "Orchestras and Conductors" in Bulgarian circus programs. It historically traces the use of various instrumental and orchestral ensembles (from chamber ensembles and brass bands to big bands), their leaders and conductors. The activities and roles of key figures who contributed to the development of both the music used in the circus and to certain trends in popular music in Bulgaria are outlined. The repertoire and arrangements of musical ensembles in their work in circus programs are examined. Conclusions are reached about the stages in the complex path that Bulgarian musicians have traveled in their work in various circuses from the establishment of circus art in Bulgaria to the 1980s.

The fourth chapter traces the "Tours Abroad" of Bulgarian circus troupes. The subject of attention are many significant visits to Romania, Poland, and Israel in the 1950s and 1960s. The importance of certain ensembles and soloists is pointed out - for example, the jazz of the Optimists, Liana Antonova, Snezhka Dobрева, Lea Ivanova, and the Olympia Mundharmoniki Trio.

Chapter Five discusses the so-called "Musical Clownery", which is an important contribution to the study. It is concluded that musical clownery in Bulgaria is related to the opera and operetta genres. The activities of the first Bulgarian musical clowns and their specifics are outlined. Buffo-synchronists and their performances in circus shows are presented. The significance of musical clownery in the Bulgarian context as cultivating a taste for the performing arts and as a basis for further achievements of Bulgarian humorists is summarized.

The following sixth chapter analyses the role and significance of the 'Singers of Comic Songs' - authors of lyrics and songs of topical nature whose performances accompanied the clowns' sketches. Major figures in this genre are introduced, such as Stoyan Milenkov and Jakob Goldstein (Jib). Mihail Lukanov's conclusions, which define the Western European and Bulgarian models in their work, are useful. For example, for Stoyan Milenkov, the songs he created follow intonation patterns from the French chanson, and others are in the spirit of regional folklore.

Chapter Seven also discusses 'Virtuosity and the Circus' as specific to musical performances. It analyses the activities of some significant musicians and their virtuoso performances in the Bulgarian circus arena. References are made to the virtuoso performances of musicians from Europe - for example, Baron Bouika. Observations on two specific ensembles are valuable - the Brio Mundharmonic Quartet and the Olympia Mundharmonic Trio. The conclusions about the interrelation between virtuosity in circus art and musical virtuosity, which leads to eccentric artistic solutions of musical numbers, are fruitful.

The conclusion draws important findings in the study, and these are of a contributory nature. Mihail Lukanov concludes that the analyses of the musical practices used in the circus arena are grounds for talking about music in circus performances rather than a distinct type(s) of circus music. Another significant conclusion is that music in

the circus must be considered in terms of its functionality. Another important conclusion is that in the middle of the twentieth century circus performances in Bulgaria became an oasis and one of the few venues for specific musicians and types of music (e.g., jazz). Some circus performances also became an opportunity to cultivate a taste for other performing arts.

The attached interviews in the habilitation thesis are a valuable contribution as they present the reflections of participants in the phenomena and events under study.

In summary, the contributions of Mihail Lukanov's submission to the competition can be outlined in several directions. On the one hand, they are related to the music of the circus arena as an essential part of the history of popular music in Bulgaria (mainly in the analyzed habilitation thesis). On the other hand, the achievements, and the role of certain personalities in popular music in Bulgaria in the first half and the middle of the twentieth century are presented (I will point to the study of Miljo Bassan). On the third, popular music is examined in two of the presented publications from a theoretical and philosophical-aesthetic point of view through the analysis of concepts such as author, authorship, and creativity. This can also be taken as a wish for further research in this direction.

I would recommend greater precision in the use of some translations of musical terminology, names of musicians, works and citation of electronic sources.

In conclusion, I declare that the academic publications and activities submitted for the competition meet the requirements of the ADASRB and the RAADASRB in terms of scope and content. The contributions and the overall scholarly activity of the candidate are the grounds for me to convincingly propose to the esteemed Scientific Council of the Institute of Art Studies to elect Asst. Prof. Dr Mihail Todorov Lukanov for the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

Sofia, 6 January 2023

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