

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Simo Lazarov

on the dissertation of

Iliana Petrova Salazar

EUROPEAN CHOREOGRAPHERS ORIENTED TO *DANCE-THERAPY* AND ITS
APPLICATION IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

For acquiring the educational and academic degree "Doctor"

In Music Studies and Music Art, professional direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art

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Iliana Petrova Salazar's creative nature is a reflection of her inner peace and sense of creation, oriented towards everything that is a novelty. Even from a global point of view, the issue of her doctoral work is new and not that well researched. This gives both an advantage for the doctoral student and a responsibility to place the milestones, if not of the world, then at least of the Bulgarian research analyzes. And why not the world?

Each nation bears the specific creative features, determined by both the geographical features and the creative potential of the nation. And the Bulgarian creative potential is huge, a fact that we have been convinced of many times. In the direction of the academic classical methods of ballet art known to us, we have world achievements, which gives us the confidence to continue in the new, current, modern. Iliana Petrova Salazar does just that.

How does the doctoral student defend these starting positions of movement in its therapeutic functions, defined as **dance-therapy**? I would say - unquestionably in an analytical and academic manner. Needless to emphasize the enormous work done, because it is obvious. The volume of the academic research exceeds what is usually necessary.

The orientation of dance-therapy in its various forms in the conditions of modern society and its placement within this study is an indisputable success for the doctoral student. This exceptional and fundamental work, revealing the theoretical formulations in the research and in the realization of dance-therapy is a basis and a starting point to the next step in mastering the high academic requirements.

The doctoral student **methodically** analyzes and examines her statements and conditions.

1. Because she writes that the existing psychophysical renewal, having the constituent elements, carries its irrefutable functions in the various research directions.
2. Because the main purpose, the object of study are well formulated.
3. Because the emphasis in the separate components outlining the scientific substantiation and analysis is clearly defined. In this way of combining different research methods: historical, inductive, comparative, analytical and interdisciplinary research methods, the result cannot be different from **excellent**.

Arguments:

1. The exposition follows the logical development in the synthesis of the information
2. The exposition is also a foundation for analysis and interpretation of the events.
3. The historical plan of the exposition in its interpretation of the theme of dance as a **form of healing** in antiquity with the choreographic-compositional techniques and psychosomatic impact of the ritual dance is made thoroughly and analytically.
4. The topic of dance as a factor for the existence of **a harmonious and highly organized life**, as well as other relationships, are considered scientifically and conceptually.

Last but not least, attention is paid to the existence of the trinity - body, psyche and spirit - the connected system that predetermines the existence of dance as such. And the idea of dance as a form of therapy is clearly defined and justified and appears as a prerequisite for dance-therapy of the 21st century.

The many examples about artists working in this field complements the palette of scientific research with specific patterns that paint a picture of the development of dance therapy and outline the foundation of research.

Inevitably for the modern reality the doctoral student reaches the **interdisciplinary aspects** of dance-therapy and its connection with the medical aspect as multidirectional and formative.

In all spiritual cultures, the presence of **music** is more or less felt as a kind of subtext for the realization of movement. The specific features, predetermined by the variety of tones and the intonation features of the geographical region, is a fundamental condition for the realization of dance culture. It is natural for music in this sense to participate in the study of its connection with dance-therapy. Of course, I would say that it is mandatory and appears as an integral part of dance-

therapy. The fantasy of the movement, combined with the genre and stylistic character of the musical performance, makes dance-therapy inextricably linked with the nature of music.

Although the word **music** is relatively rarely used in the doctoral study, it hovers in the subtext of the presentation. But it is also felt in the subtext of the meditative influence on the one hand and as a real component on the other. In the research and in the overall analysis, it goes hand in hand with the sub-textual awareness in the analysis of the meaning of dance-therapy. It would seem incomplete if, at least in the essence of dance-therapy, the harmony of the Universe, expressed through music, does not participate.

Each different musical interval heals in a certain way and in this capacity music is an integral part of therapy. In this regard, Iliana Petrova Salazar expresses the opinion that "in the art of dance the main information tool is the body and dance - the rhythmic movement of man" and of great importance is "music-therapy through sound separation, sound extraction and sound perception." The associative perception of the word **dance** is related to the idea of the presence of music. On the other hand - within the famous aphorism that "the best music is the **pause**", i.e. **silence**, we can ask ourselves the question: Does this mean that in dance-therapy there should be no music or at least no sound? Or is silence a priority?

In the dissertation a musical little stream creeps in, and why not turn this stream into a full-flowing river. Music with its main components - melody, harmony, rhythm brings the freedom of movement and the ability to make sense and motivate this movement. Using the comparison with the lush river - water, as one of the categories such as fire, earth, air and water we can continue with the natural elements. And isn't dance an element - an emotion of movement? And should it be present in dance-therapy?

If we continue with this comparison of natural elements, I think that the subject of Iliana Petrova Salazar's study is like rich and uniquely green forest where anyone can get lost.

The **main goal** of the academic work has been achieved. The revival of dance as a means of psychophysical influence and therapy has been clearly studied and its developed by European choreographers and artists of the twentieth century revealed. The compositional approaches to dance improvisation and choreographic structures have been fundamentally studied. Proved has been the thesis that "they compare the expressive (emotional) and semantic (mental) construction of the dance elements as a determining factor for the construction and use of dance as a therapeutic method."

The doctoral student analyzes the relationship *dance - choreography - therapy* in accordance with the specifics of the art of dance. This is quite necessary in

view of the importance of clarifying the newly introduced concepts such as: *dance-therapy*, *dance-movement therapy*, *dance medicine*, *therapeutic choreography*. In this way she made a successful attempt to build new terminological apparatus.

As an upgrading system for gathering and synthesis of information sources on the problem, she uses a system of methods that serve as a "foundation for analysis and interpretation of events in their relationship with other scientific fields and historical-theoretical formulations that directly reflect on the perception and the practice of dance as a therapeutic tool and its interdisciplinary application in the 21st century." This gives a complete and clear in its conceptuality picture, which precisely and unambiguously defines the stages of development and application over the years. The conditions for development in the European space in the sense of *dance-therapy* as a product of dance art are perfectly presented.

Through the prism of choreographic art, doctoral study provides comprehensive information about several generations of European choreographers and artists who have contributed to the revival of dance as therapy. The doctoral student clearly outlines the two main choreographic-compositional techniques in dance-therapy and in the methodology of European choreographers, presenting and commenting on the use of basic choreographic methods, which are an important prerequisite for developing choreographic knowledge in the field of dance as therapy.

The richness of literary sources and their skillful citation in the context of the issue complement this magnificent work, characterizing it, as far as I know, as a pioneer of the topic in Bulgaria.

The contributions of the doctoral dissertation give a clear idea of the enormous work done. Contributions that clearly show the benefits of this amazing research work. Listing only some of them may give us the full picture of the study. They also provide directions for future research that must inevitably continue, because the topic of dance-therapy has yet to be developed.

I will allow myself to quote some of the contributions that make an impression and draw a complete picture of the formation and application of a European model of dance-therapy - considered from the standpoint of choreographic art.

1. The basic requirements for the profession of dance therapist are clarified, based on the European *professional qualification standards* and on European prototypes in the profession – the choreographers.
2. The differences in the perception and practice of dance-therapy by choreographers and other specialists are presented.
3. An attempt is made to build an information bridge between the European and American *dance-therapy model*.

4. Indicated are the ways and areas of application of dance-therapy in scientific, educational, extracurricular and health forms and the ways in which it is associated with psychology, psychotherapy, art-therapy, motor therapy, kinesiotherapy, social and medical sciences, oriented to psychosomatic relationships and therapy.

5. *Paneurhythmy* as a therapeutic choreographic construct is analyzed, indicating the Bulgarian participation in the development of dance as a means of therapy;

6. Information about modern healing dance practices in Bulgaria is offered.

This paper provides an interdisciplinary focus for the study of the relationship between art-therapy, psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, medicine, biomedicine, anthropology, neuroscience, biomechanics. This is an extremely in-depth and interesting study of EUROPEAN CHOREOGRAPHERS, ORIENTED TO DANCE-THERAPY AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE 20th AND 21st CENTURY. A topic relevant, with huge scientific potential and future. Iliana Petrova Salazar outlines the contours of this future with the exceptional analyzes and conclusions that carry the weight of serious academic research.

The almost unexplored field, both in European practice and in Bulgarian science, forms a new scientific field, for the foundation of which in Bulgaria Iliana Petrova Salazar will have a founding role. Here we must underline the joint work and the scientific management with her academic supervisor Prof. Dr. Assoc. Prof. Anelia Yaneva.

Argumenting myself with the above conclusions about the doctoral dissertation and concluding that the doctoral student fully meets the necessary requirements, I propose to the esteemed academic jury to award Iliana Petrova Salazar the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor** of Music Studies and Music Art, professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art.

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