

OPINION

Of the dissertation work for acquiring the educational and academic degree "Doctor"
on specialty Musicology and Music Art,

professional direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art

Subject of the dissertation: *European Choreographers Oriented to Dance-therapy
and its Application in the 20th and 21st Century*

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Reviewer: Prof. DSc Ventsislav Dimov (Institute of Art Studies – BAS; SU "St
Kliment Ohridski")

1. Presentation of the doctoral student

Iliana Salazar is a full-time doctoral student at the Music Department of the Institute of Art Studies - BAS. The presented biographical reference shows her expertise on the issues of the dissertation: dance graduate and choreographer-director with specializations in the field of dance-therapy, with many certificates, with a large number of academic publications. I have witnessed her activity in the Music Department and in the academic conferences held by the Institute.

2. Presentation of the dissertation

The dissertation has a volume of 272 pages of main text. The contents of the dissertation are structured in the following way – main presentation in three sections, bibliography and appendix.

The introduction (pp. 6-14) contains the necessary basic information: justification for the choice of the topic and its relevance; object and scope; goals and tasks of the academic work; research methods; work structure; terminological apparatus; clarifications about the limitations of the study.

The first section, entitled "Dance as a Form of Healing in Antiquity" (pp. 15-51), outlines the historical approaches to the topic, tracing the main manifestations of dance as a ritual practice in various cultures "from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", but also includes phenomena from other epochs (for example, ecstatic, masculine rituals associated with initiation and healing practices, characteristic of the local Balkan folk cultures, which continue to live as an intangible cultural heritage today).

The second section, called "The Idea of Dance as Therapy (20th century in Europe)" (pp. 52-175) is basic and is expanded in the text. It presents the author's observations and analyzes on the object of research during a certain period (from

the end of the 19th to the end of the 20th century), related to rediscovering the healing possibilities of dance in the synthesis of ideas of "spiritual-philosophical" schools and teachings with those of scientists and practicing choreographers and musicologists. The approval of the new scientific and applied direction of dance-therapy by iconic European choreographers has been traced. The content is structured in three chapters: "Prerequisites for the Revival of Dance as Therapy in the 20th century"; "Choreographers Associated with the Idea of Dance as Therapy (second half of the 19th century - mid-20th century)" and "Choreographers Using Dance as Therapy (mid-20th - early 21st century)".

Section three - "Application of Dance-therapy (21st century)" (pp. 176-227) - is the other key part of the dissertation, which describes and analyzes the establishing and institutionalization of dance-therapy as a "method of analysis, diagnosis, integration and re-socialization, which has entered Europe since the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century". Salazar presents her own research on the intersections between dance and therapy, demonstrating enviable empirical knowledge, combined with information and use of little-known academic literature and methodology on the subject and the ability to competently understand current events. This leads to outlining the ways and areas of application of dance-therapy in a modern interdisciplinary context.

The conclusion (pp. 228-234) summarizes the results of the study and highlights its contributions. She concludes that dance therapy with roots in ancient dance-ritual practices and modern development as an art of iconic European choreographers and artists is an important object of academic research. In this case, this outlines a "European model of dance-therapy", viewed both from the standpoint of "choreographic art" and its science, and through interdisciplinary readings of a phenomenon seen as a synthesis of "creativity, culture, education, science, social and intercultural relations". Such view allows dance-therapy to be interpreted both as an object for scientific interdisciplinary readings and as a field for the study of a phenomenon of high social significance from the point of view of current applied musicology and choreology.

The appendix "Institutions and Educational Programs in Dance-therapy in Europe (in chronology of their creation)" is an important part of the work. The table, containing rich information about dance-therapy during the period 1982 to 2019, in the columns "State", "Institution" and "Educational Structures" is an individual product of Salazar, specially created for the needs of the dissertation.

The cited literature and sources (bibliography of 202 titles in Cyrillic and Latin, and 438 Internet sources) are an example of both huge preliminary work and enviable scientific awareness, as well as the necessary "scientific literacy" to structure harmoniously and clearly rich and diverse sources.

The abstract (with a volume of 48 pages) correctly conveys the content of the dissertation. Attached is a list of publications on the topic (twelve, two of which in international, indexed and referenced publications).

3. Contributions

The personal contributions of the doctoral student and the work are presented in 12 paragraphs without numbers in the abstract. I accept them as a correct assessment in several directions: 1.) the collected and structured basic information about dance-therapy is new and useful for different scientific fields; 2.) an unexplored object is studied – dance-therapy, for the first time a broad and comparative description is made, as the facts and processes are understood diachronically and presented typologically - a sign of critical thinking and analyticity; 3.) emphasis is placed on specific aspects of the phenomenon as a musical and dance art - choreographic and compositional techniques, improvisation, etc.; 4.) dance-therapeutic models are derived, which are also argued through analyzes of professional practices and standards in comparative terms.

I would also like to add that the work is contributive, has a high value and deserves excellent evaluation in several areas: as information, innovation, structure, competence, relevance, originality, scientific and practical applicability. The scientific issues that Salazar deals with are complex, important and still not seriously studied in Bulgaria; her work is the first and successful academic research - both as a choice of topic and object, and as a formulation of goals and objectives and the application of an appropriate interdisciplinary methodology. It presents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon through the long-term search, analysis and interpretation of a huge array of primary and secondary sources. The competence of the author has provided the necessary scientific analysis, important in the study of an object that is new in musicology and choreology, and difficult to capture because, what is relevant, it is happening now. And multifaceted: as a media fact and commercial use, the dances that Salazar explores are part of modern complex cultural syntheses of spiritual movements, body practices, art therapy, creative industries, media fashions, etc. - all of them intertwined in one sphere, which becomes even more challenging and difficult for scientific understanding and evaluation due to its inclusion in modern global popular culture. Last but not least - because it examines phenomena of global and European scale through a Bulgarian perspective, and as the inclusion of the Bulgarian trace in dance-therapy, and as opportunities for Bulgarian science to study them without scientific provincialism and "Byron complexes".

3. Notes and recommendations

The critical understanding and the outlined contributions give me the right to highly recommend Iliana Salazar's dissertation to be published as a monograph

after some editorial work. In the context of such editing of a high-quality text are some of my critical remarks. Some terminological "roughness" hinder the otherwise literate text. For example, the concept chosen in the title of Section 1. "Antiquity" denotes a historically and spatially different object from the phenomena traced in this part of the text (shamanism also exists in Asia and America, not only in the ancient world; traditional rituals such as "Kalush" and "Rusali Games" are part of the local folk cultures of the Balkans, which are alive as cultural heritage and folklore practices up to the present day, etc.). The abstract on contributions could have been clearer and better-structured (a possible typology on a larger scale I suggested above). Some of the Internet sources can be presented not only with links, but also with a description of institutions, educational structures, media, authors; as well as with the date of visit of the sights.

5. Conclusion

The dissertation "European Choreographers Oriented to Dance-therapy and its Application in the 20th and 21st Century" by Iliana Petrova Salazar, full-time doctoral student at the Music Group, Department of Music, Institute of Art Studies - BAS meets the requirements of LASRB and PPLASRB for acquiring the educational and academic degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3. Music and dance art. The peer-reviewed work explores important musicological and choreography issues, further develops and enriches the existing knowledge, introduces unknown material, part of which is sought, analyzed and structured comprehensively and thoroughly by the author. My assessment of the work is positive. It is a high assessment for both the doctoral student and her research supervisor Prof. DSc Anelia Yaneva, and for the academic community of the Department of Music at the Institute of Art Studies - BAS, where the doctoral student was trained and developed as a researcher. I believe that the esteemed jury shares such a high assessment and I strongly recommend that it award the educational and academic degree "Doctor" to Iliana Petrova Salazar.

Sofia, September 3, 2020

Prof. DSc Ventsislav Dimov