

OPINION

Of the dissertation work:

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

For acquiring the educational and academic degree "Doctor" on specialty
Musicology and Music Art, professional direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art

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The research study presented by the doctoral student Iliana Petrova has a volume of 272 pages, which includes an Introduction, seven chapters, divided thematically into three sections, a conclusion and a bibliography containing 652 sources in Bulgarian, Russian, English and Latin, of which 202 monographs, 12 academic papers and dissertations, 438 electronic publications.

INTRODUCTION. The conciseness and content make an impression. Instead of trying the usual "gaining" of volume with general introductory thoughts, here we have concentrated but richly presented information about the relevance of the topic, goals and objectives of the dissertation, the scope and methodology of the study. The structure and the main terminological clarifications are described.

This shows the contributive character of the work: Iliana Petrova clearly sets the issues that excite her, succinctly outlining the context that gives rise to it - a kind of disintegration of Dance-Therapy into its constituent elements, on whose therapeutic effect the focus of modern therapies related to movement focus pushing the dance out of it, turning it from a *root cause into an optional consequence*.

Without opposing the new forms and directions, she states her main goal, as well as the tasks she has to solve according to them. Defines the object and subject of the research, as well as the specific accents that suggest the direction of future contributions.

The outlined scope of the research has a scale, but at the same time specificity, which gives a direction for an ambitious and purposeful study.

The doctoral student presents a serious arsenal of research methods, motivates the need for each of them and indicates where they will be applied. This gives an expectation of depth, through their actual application in the course of the study itself.

The presented structure is not wasteful and at the same time corresponds to the ambition of the intentions.

Finally, several conditions are set that aim to provide a key to understanding and prevent misinterpretation of the study. This speaks of intelligence and depth in the candidate's analytical thinking.

The terminology with some reservations is left open, which is also, in my opinion, a predictable, resourceful approach in the research.

SECTION I "DANCE AS A FORM OF TREATMENT IN ANCIENT TIMES", Iliana Petrova discusses in two chapters: *Dance as a ritual practice and Dance in antiquity as a preventive and healing tool*.

Here the study shows a serious level of reasoning, moving from a free philosophical to a strictly scientific and anthropological plan, making bridges by analogy between the various concepts of the Creation and Structure of the Universe, the nature of man and the fundamental nature of Dance.

Impressive is the ease of expression, the integrity of the mental causal and associative flow.

From here, the doctoral student enters a complex subject for scientific analysis - the Ritual. The ritual burdens the dance with a specific meaning - here the leading factor is the attitude of the human consciousness - it gives content to the dance form and materializes its power of influence on the performer.

In this chapter, the doctoral student deserves admiration for considering the concept of "faith" in a scientific aspect. The concept itself is "thin ice", if only because, by definition, "faith" is that which is beyond the bounds of science - all of which we have no logical scientific evidence for. Petrova tries to avoid the "thin ice" by considering this term in the direction of *adjustment of the Consciousness*. This part of the doctorate is to some extent a movement along the razor's edge, between science and metaphysics. But if we take into account the cleverly specified stipulations at the beginning (which set the condition "not to prove" but to seek and establish the application of dance as therapy), we can assume that it avoids the possibility of slipping and staggering into mysticism, setting the focus not on beliefs but on the empirical experience of the past.

The fact that she does not engage in distinguishing the *objective (the applied - the effective pragmatic-utilitarian, neutral-objective component)* from the *subjective (interpretation - the subjectivism of beliefs and superstitions)* can also be accepted as

a manifestation of *common sense*. Such a distinction requires serious personal practical experience gained through real work with such practices. But even with such experience, there would be a danger that the analysis would be, to a large extent, a matter of conjecture. For stable conclusions in this direction, information is needed about the effectiveness and sustainability of such treatments – i.e. what percentage of those treated in this way recover, what is the percentage of relapses and for how long they maintain their health.

The value of this section, however, is undeniable. An overview of dance from antiquity, as an archetype of modern dance-therapy, is sufficient enough. The scale of the study is impressive in terms of a global spectrum of cultures and eras - from ancient Asian culture (Tibet, India, China, Malaysia) through Siberia, Africa, Scandinavia, North and South America, Australia and others to our lands. As well as the entry into depth - the classifications on various grounds - according to the level of expression (ecstasy and harmony), according to the goal (protective and healing), according to the state of consciousness (trance and ecstasy), the parallels between them, the richness of the considered examples, their internal structure in terms of healing strategy and dance approach (choreography and improvisation), etc. etc.

SECTION II. THE IDEA OF DANCE AS THERAPY (20th CENTURY IN EUROPE) is a large-scale study of the path of modern dance-therapy in chronological, conceptual and essential terms. The volume and quality of the work done in it are of such an order that I have to approach it in a non-standard way:

From the first words, with a light touch to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the doctoral student jumps high to various "galaxies" - **body-oriented practices, psychological theories in the twentieth century, the idea of dance as therapy, (creators of) expressive dance language (choreographers using) dance as therapy, dance-therapeutic methods, influenced by classical /modern/ exercise, etc.** Each of these galaxies is represented by constellations of names, with different degrees of popularity, but selected and significant for the discussed thesis, I present them "in bulk": Kalmayer, Jindler, Ehrenfried, Selver, Douno, Steiner, Gurdjieff, Dalcroze, Grikoz, Dupre, Kifford, Gurevich, Prof. Ozeretsky, Helnitz, Menzlova, Duncan, Menzendick, Dunham, Alexander, Delsart, Goddard, Genevieve, Stebbins, Emile Jacques-Dalcroze, Günther, Laban, Wigman, Bodenwieser, Chase, Ua , Polk, Bartenieff, Schoop, Falke-Heller, Gerda Alexander, Lindenberg, Holger, Fe Reichelt, Sherborn, Path, Maurice, Leon-Fritch, Auteure, and others. It is not even possible to have the luxury to list their full names, because the opinion will exceed the required volume. That's why I kept the great desire to comment on the magnificently done research work. Many of the names in this cosmos of study, I suppose, are deeply unknown to many practitioners in these fields. And here they are, not just "listed" - here they are "scanned" in depth with "ultrasound accuracy" and "diagnosed" beautifully in terms of the goals which the study seeks. The section is respectful and in itself is sufficient for acquiring the educational degree "Doctor".

SECTION III. APPLICATION OF DANCE THERAPY (21st century) traces the institutionalization of dance-therapy in the period of the Second World War. During second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century many therapeutic methods and alternative medical practices were created. The origination of the institutions, the establishment of dance-therapy as a profession, as well as the origin of training in dance-therapy are considered in detail – the author dwells on a number of names that have contributed in this field - Prof. Dr. Marcia Leventhal, Marcia Plevin, Maria Fuchs, Prof. Marion Nord, Prof. Helen Payne, Janet McDonald's, Annelies Schrijnen-van Gastel, Elaine Siegel, Susanna Bender, Sabine Troutman-Feucht, Petra Kleine, Isabel Figueira, Rosa Maria Giovanni, Dr. Bonnie Meekums, etc.

The research in this section does not remain in the "statistical" horizontal, as should be expected in such cases, but has depth, analyzing the standardization of a number of qualitative indicators in this area (standards and ethical codes, methodological techniques and dance-therapy techniques, the qualities of the dance-therapist, etc.). Here we are purposefully looking for a transition from the "horizontal" to the "depth", a bridge from the "informative" to the content-professional context (e.g.: *Status* → *Requirements* → *Qualities* of the dance therapist).

In Chapter 2. (Section III) the doctoral student considers Dance-therapy not only in the two directions of its hybridity: *Dance-therapy - Dance and Dance-therapy - Therapy*, but also seeks the relationship with science (psychological sciences, psychodynamic movement, anthropology), medicine, neuroscience, robotics, thematic research at CERN. Impressive range: classical ballet, Latin American and ballroom dancing, Argentine tango, Oriental dance, traditional and folk dances, ancient practices and dance, integrative dance and therapeutic choreography psychological sciences, psychodynamic movement, anthropology, medicine, neuroscience, robotics, thematically related research at CERN - Martha Merenyi, Dr. Lovat, Scott-Billman, Natalie Duong, Barry Seemungle.

Taking into account the ACCENTS, the candidate turns her work into a practical guide that can help many hospitals, doctors and patients to alternative methods of effective recovery. This part abounds with serious results from the evidence of some of the most serious experts and researchers in this field: Pailvonoinen, Muotka, Lapalainen Breininger, Mills, Daniluk, Michel, Dubaz and Bega, Hackney and Earhart, Hokanen, Dayanim, Fange de Vince, Diane, Albin, Rainders, Bryden, Fletcher, Martin Roichricht and Praib, Xia and Grant, Hecox, Levine, Scott, Maling, Sherman, Coopers, Takahashi, Devos, etc.

3.2.3 is also interesting. **The Bulgarian trace in dance-therapy** - Dimitar Krastev, Rozmari De Meo, Plamen Ivanov, Denitsa Ilcheva, Siika Georgieva.

The CONCLUSION, although with a nuance of summary, contains precisely synthesized general conclusions and gives a valuable finale to the whole study.

In addition, precise appendixes and a well-structured Bibliography can be noted.

This opinion, so far, has been sufficiently saturated with positive comments and assessments, which the study fully deserves, so we can summarize in one sentence:

The work, together with the appendixes, has the value of an encyclopedic edition in the field of dance-therapy. Moreover, I would say, unique in its kind in our country and I recommend that it be published in the future so that its contribution value can be made available to all professionals and those interested in this topic.

I offer my admiration to the doctoral student Iliana Petrova Salazar for the successful realization of her efforts and I wish her "Good luck!" in a possible academic and teaching career.

I vote "YES"!

08.09.2020

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