

OPINION

by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rumyana Nikolova**, Institute of Art Studies - BAS
on the dissertation of **Petar Borislavov Denchev**, full-time doctoral student at the
Institute of Art Studies - BAS, on the topic:

*Use and Function of Space in the Theatrical Performance
from 1968 to the Present Day*

for receiving the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

Scientific adviser - Prof. DSc Kamelia Nikolova

Petar Denchev's dissertation *Use and Function of Space in the Theatrical Performance from 1968 to the Present Day* has a volume of 332 p. and is organized in the following way: an introduction, five chapters, conclusion and results and bibliography.

The object of research is space in the theatrical performance in the Bulgarian theater in the period from 1968 to the present day, considered through the tandem work between directors and scenographers.

The introduction specifies the field, tasks and approach of the research, presents its structure and sources. The task of the dissertation is formulated as follows: *“to fill some of the problem fields, but also to present with its deliberate choice of tandems between directors and scenographers the field of performance space in the Bulgarian theater and its dynamic development from the end of 60s to the present day. Not only that, but the text also allows itself to open up a slightly broader perspective, through which to place its conceptual approach in a wider time frame.”*

Chapter one - *The Problem of Space* deals with space from a philosophical and conceptual point of view. The main ideas about space in the theater are presented and analyzed. Numerous texts by theater theorists and practitioners, philosophers and humanists have been used and cited, making this presentation comprehensive. Thinking of space both as a theoretical category and from the point of view of its practical application is a contribution of the dissertation. The text continues in concretizing its object of study, by answering the question of what makes a space theatrical and by tracing the first partnerships between director and set designer in the context of European theater - Max Reinhardt and Ernst Stern, Leopold Jessner with Emil Pirchan and others and in the Bulgarian context - Hrisan Tsankov and Ivan Penkov; in the late 50's and 60's - Leon Daniel and Mladen Mladenov, Villi Tsankov and Mihail Mihailov, Metodi Andonov and Ivan Kirkov / Stefan Savov, in the 70's - Krikor Azaryan and Mladen Mladenov, Nikolay Lyutskanov and Georgi Ivanov, Georgi Nozharov and Lyuben Groys, Ivan Dobchev and Vyacheslav Parapanov; in the

80s - Elena Tsikova and Krassimir Valkanov, Vazkresia Viharova and Zarko Uzunov, Zdravko Mitkov and Nevena Kavaldzhieva, Stoyan Kambarev and Violeta Radkova, Slavi Shkarov and Neiko Neykov.

This chapter also considers scenography as a conceptual part of the space, emphasizing the difference between the space of the performance and the scenography space.

Chapter two - *Modeling of Space* provides an overview of the ideas of space in historical terms - Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and modernity.

The third chapter *Modeling Space in the Bulgarian Theater: from its Appearance to the end of World War II* covers the development of Bulgarian theater from its inception to the end of World War II through the prism of ideas about space. The basic notions of theatricality and their impact on the ideas of space in the theater are presented, as well as the figures of theatrical practitioners who, through their performances, form their views on theatrical space.

Chapter four - *Manipulating Space: Stable Tandems Between Director and Set Designer in the 60s, 70s and 80s of the Twentieth Century in the Bulgarian Theater* is central to the study. Traced here is the development of ideas about space over three decades of the history of Bulgarian theater. Partnerships between directors and scenographers are presented, which are decisive for the processes in the Bulgarian theater of the mentioned period and whose stage practices carry in themselves the energies of innovation and contribute to the development of the stage language.

Chapter Five *Occupation and Emancipation - The Postmodern Space from the 1990s to the Present* brings out the basic processes in the theater in the years after the political changes in 1989 and the elimination of the requirements of socialist realism to the present day. The text captures the dynamics in the ideas of space. New partnerships between director and set designer are considered, as well as performances that use spaces other than the classical theater building.

The topic of Petar Denchev's dissertation is interdisciplinary and not well researched in Bulgarian theater studies. The research field touches on philosophy, psychology, etc. The dissertation impresses us with the in-depth knowledge of the researched object. The author manages to present the ideas about space in their historical and philosophical development, as well as to condense this story through the specific stage practices of tandems between set designers and directors.

I find that the dissertation of Petar Denchev presents in many ways a poorly researched problem in Bulgarian theatrical science. The text demonstrates in-depth research and good knowledge of sources and research on the topic, which is upgraded with a study of archival materials, reviews, etc. The author also demonstrates a good knowledge and understanding of the historical context in which the phenomena under consideration are situated. The well-organized structure turns the work into a fascinating read and

contributes to the clear derivation of the main problems and presentation of the studied phenomena. All this makes the text sound complete and convincing, with excellent presentation of the conclusions.

In conclusion, and in view of the presented qualities of the dissertation, I recommend the esteemed members of the scientific jury to vote positively and to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty Theater Studies and Theater Art, professional field 8.4. Theater and Film Art of Petar Denchev.

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