

REVIEW

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Miglena Tsenova

Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

(BAS), Music Department

on the dissertation

"Development of Ballet Art in Bourgas"

by Rosen Metodiev Nikolov

for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

Scientific specialty: "Musicology and Music Art"

PF 8.3 "Music and Dance Art"

Academic supervisor: Prof. DSc Anelia Yaneva

Rosen Metodiev Nikolov has graduated in 1999 as a baccalaureate in "Pedagogy of Choreography" at the Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski" – Blagoevgrad, and in 2015 – had his master's degree in Choreography Production at the same university. Since 2016 Nikolov is working on his doctoral thesis at the Research Group (RG) "Musical Theater", department of "Music" at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS.

In connection with the proposed dissertation Rosen Metodiev Nikolov wrote three (3) articles published in four (4) scientific journals (in alphabetical order):

- "The image of the artist, realized in ballets on the Bourgas stage." - In: *Multidisciplinary Journal of Science, Education and Art*. Blagoevgrad: Union of Scientists in Bulgaria - Branch Blagoevgrad, 2019 (published in 2020), pp. 585 - 591, link;
- "The image of the artist, realized in ballet works on the Bourgas stage." - In: *Media, Culture, Business, 2020*, pp. 97 - 104;
- "Contemporary choreography in Bourgas. Development issues. " - In: *Art Studies Readings 2019*. Sofia: Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2020, pp. 600 - 607, link;
- "Transformations of classical ballet repertoire on the Bourgas stage". - In: *Art Studies Readings 2020*. Sofia: Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2021, pp. 495 - 500, link.

The doctoral student has presented four (4) reports and academic forums (chronologically):

- "Contemporary choreography in Bourgas. Development issues. " - In: *Art Studies Readings 2019*. Sofia: Institute of Art Studies, Sofia, April 9-12 2019;

- "Dance events that influenced the image of the Bourgas Opera and Ballet", *Tenth doctoral readings*, NSMSA "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov", Sofia, May 15 - 16, 2019;
- "The connection between theater and dance in the initial formation of music and performing arts in Bourgas", *International Theater Conference*, Blagoevgrad, June 30, 2019;
- "The image of the artist, realized in ballet works on the Bourgas stage", forum of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad, September 26 - 27, 2019.

During his doctoral studies, Rosen Metodiev Nikolov wrote reviews and opinions related to the art of ballet in Bourgas, which were published in a popular science publication (chronologically):

- "A Little Prince on the Bourgas Stage" - In: *Arts Platform*, 2016 - 2017, Year II, № 4, pp. 55 - 59, link;
- "Sleeping Beauty" on the Bourgas stage "- In: *Arts Platform*, 2017 - 2018, year III, № 1, pp. 39 - 42, link;
- "La Bayadere - a beautiful experience." - In: *Arts Platform*, 2017 - 2018, year III, № 4, pp. 34 - 37, link.

Popular science texts are also published in English in the same publication - as three (3) separate additional publications.

As can be seen from the cited publication activity of the doctoral student, the requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" are met and exceeded¹.

The presented dissertation is part of a large-scale strategy, initiated in 1999 by the founder and long-term head of the Musical Theater research group, Prof. DSc Rosalia Bix, and continued successfully by the current head of the same research group, Prof. DSc Anelia Yaneva: PhD students to be directed to topics that require in-depth work with archival funds, inkunabularen and local history publications. Following a similar strategy, the completed dissertations are valuable both as individual studies and in the context of the overall work on the history of the Bulgarian Musical Theater (opera, ballet, operetta, musical), carried out at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS. The academic achievements of the dissertations - clearly presented and argued tendencies and processes, newly discovered circumstances, bibliographic units, etc.², contribute

¹ Regulations for application of the law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, 2010, amended and ext. 2019, link; Regulations on the terms and conditions for the acquisition of scientific degrees and for holding academic positions at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS, link.

² In chronological order: Tsenova, Miglena. Urban choral culture until the mid-40s of the 20th century as a prerequisite for the emergence of musical theaters in Bulgaria. Sofia: Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2002. (Dissertation for ESD "Doctor", manuscript; supervisor: R. Bix); Bozhova, Nelly. Petar Raichev in the vocal art of the 20th century. Sofia: Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2009. (Dissertation for ESD "Doctor", manuscript, supervisor: R. Bix, published in 2009); Acheva, Denitsa. The Ruse Ballet and Assen Manolov. Approaches, formation, development (Dissertation for ESD "Doctor", manuscript; supervisor: A. Yaneva; published in 2011); Junic, Emilia. The role of the soloist-singer in the

to the preservation of the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage and often find a place in the academic four-volume edition "Bulgarian Musical Theater"³.

Even before he started work on his doctorate, the author of the proposed dissertation showed deep interests in working with archives. He actively cooperated in the realization of the academic edition "Bulgarian Musical Theater", for which its authors express their gratitude⁴.

Aspects of the development of ballet art in Bourgas, derived from working with local lore publications and archival documents, are also considered in other scientific studies (I quote some of them below)⁵.

However, the proposed dissertation is the first comprehensive and covering all aspects study of ballet in Bourgas.

Rosen Nikolov's dissertation covers "Introduction" (pp. 5 - 8), six (6) sections (pp. 9 - 157), and "Conclusion" (pp. 158 - 164). The paper also contains: four appendices (pp. 165 - 177), "Bibliography" (pp. 178 - 188), "Short biographical data about the doctoral student" (p. 190), "Publications and reports of Rosen Metodiev Nikolov on the topic of the dissertation. Work" (pp. 190 - 191) and "Information on the contributions of the dissertation" (p. 192).

The chosen historical approach is consistent with the aim of the study: to achieve "systematized and justified work on the initial steps, the establishment and development of ballet in Bourgas in its overall profile" ("Introduction", p. 7).

"Section 1. Interests in dance in Bourgas" (pp. 9 - 32) is valuable with the chronological tracing of events (until the mid-40s of the 20th century), that have contributed to the formation of ideas and interests of the Bourgas public to the music genres - a solid basis for the development in perspective of ballet art in this Bulgarian city. Valuable in the section is the fact that it is based on archival documents (of community center "Probuda", community center "Izgrev" and funds of other centers)

Bulgarian Musical Theater. Based on materials from the professional musical theater in Stara Zagora. Sofia: Institute of Art Studies, 2014 (Dissertation for ESD "Doctor", manuscript; supervisor: R. Bix); and other.

³ Bix, Rosalia, Anelia Yaneva, Romyana Karakostova, Miglena Tsenova. Bulgarian Musical Theater. 1890 - 2001. Opera, ballet, operetta, musical. Theaters, troupes, productions. Vol. 2. Sofia: AI "Prof. Marin Drinov", 2005; Bix, R., A. Yaneva, R. Karakostova, M. Tsenova-Nusheva. Bulgarian Musical Theater. 1890 - 2005. Opera, ballet, operetta, musical.

Directors: conductors, directors, choreographers, scenographers, choirmasters. Vol. 3. Sofia: Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2008; Bix, R., A. Yaneva, R. Karakostova, M. Tsenova-Nusheva, E. Junich. Bulgarian Musical Theater. 1890 - 2010. Opera, ballet, operetta, musical. Reviews, reviews, comments. Vol. 4. Sofia: Gaia Libris - Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2015.

⁴ Bix, Yaneva, Karakostova, Tsenova-Nusheva, 2008, p. 13; Bix, Yaneva, Karakostova, Tsenova-Nusheva, Junich, 2015, p.12.

⁵ Such are, for example (in chronological order): Bix, Rosalia. Bulgarian Opera Theater. 1944 - 1980. Observations and materials. Sofia: Music, 1980 (p. 253, etc.); Tsenova, 2002 (pp. 21, 38 - 41, 60, 63, 68, 79 - 81, 91 - 92, 99 - 100, 103, 107, 108, 128 - 192, 132 - 133, etc.); Bix, Yaneva, Karakostova, Tsenova, 2005 (pp. 269 - 273); Mihaleva, Srebra. First builders of the Bourgas Opera. Documentary chronicle. 1920 - 1972. Bourgas: A. Consult EOOD, 2017 (pp. 321 - 354); Mikhailov, Veselin. Artistic and creative achievements and repertoire of the Bourgas Opera in the period 1955-1999, in the context of the musical and historical development of the city. Sofia: NMA "Prof. P. Vladigerov", 2020 (Dissertation for ESD "Doctor", manuscript, scientific supervisor: Boyanka Arnaudova, pp. 26, 28, 30, 42 - 53, 57, etc.); and others.

and publications in the Bourgas press (including in very old publications). Reconstruction of some events from the musical culture of Bourgas has been achieved. The material introduces little-known circumstances in Bulgarian musicology and ballet studies.

"Section 2. Amateur Opera - Bourgas. First Ballet Production" (pp. 35 - 46) is focused on the creative activity of the institution, which has realized the first complete ballet performance in the city - the ballet "Rivals", performed in 1958 (pp. 41 - 42)⁶.

"Section 3. Classical ballet repertoire at the State Opera - Bourgas" (pp. 47 - 78) and "Section 4. Contemporary choreography at the State Opera - Bourgas" (pp. 79 - 142) lets us get a better understanding of the development of ballet in the Bourgas Opera House from 1972 (when the institution was nationalized) until the last months of 2020 (till the completion of the dissertation). The structuring of the subsections - according to the repertoire: "classical repertoire" and "modern choreography" (pp. 47, 79, etc.), is in accordance with volume four of volume "Bulgarian Musical Theater"⁷. The organizing of the considered ballet works - according to their structure: "multi-act ballets" (p. 49), "one-act ballets" (p. 105), "ballet miniatures" (p. 110), etc., is analogous with monographic works by Prof. DSc Anelia Yaneva⁸. In both sections of the dissertation Rosen Metodiev Nikolov examines the creative ideas and decisions of both established Bulgarian choreographers who performed ballets in Bourgas and local choreographers with a valuable contribution to the development of ballet in the city.

In "Section 5. Contemporary dance formations with non-state funding" (pp. 143 - 146) considered is the activity of the led by the doctoral student "Dance Studio R", where Rosen Metodiev Nikolov forms his graduates and followers (pp. 144 - 145). Here it should be underlined that ballet dancers prepared by the author become part of the permanent ballet staff of the State Opera - Bourgas, other graduates are often invited to participate in separate productions of the same opera house. As can be seen from the same section of the dissertation, with "Dance Studio R" R. Metodiev Nikolov creates his own choreographies, presented on the Bourgas stage and abroad: "From Beginning to End" (1982), "The Volcano of Feelings" (1984), "My Love is My Pain" (1984), "One Love, One Dream" (1988), "Music for Love" (1989 in Bourgas and St. Petersburg), "Rebellious Blood" (1990), "The Show Must Go On" (1991), "The Essential is Invisible" (1994), "Rebellious blood 2" (1995), "Hope We Find a Home for Our Dreams" (1995), "Bourgas and the Sea" (1999), etc." (p. 145 - 146).

⁶ Here I would like to make a reference to the opinion of Prof. DSc Rosalia Bix from 1980: according to her, "Rivals" is the only complete ballet performance in the city, before the nationalization in 1972 of the National Opera - Bourgas (today the State Opera - Bourgas). Bix, 1980, pp. 253, etc.; see also Mikhailov, 2020 (Abstract, p. 26).

⁷ Bix, Yaneva, Karakostova, Tsenova-Nusheva, Junich, 2015.

⁸ Yaneva, Anelia. Choreographic approaches and genre transformations in ballets from the classical repertoire. Sofia: Institute Art Studies, BAS, 2009; and others.

According to the overall idea of the work, the author examines his own creative and pedagogical contribution: "Metodiev pays special attention to the flexibility of the hand movements and the "inner impulse" of the body. In his choreography he uses mainly elements of jazz-ballet, many contractions of the body, breathing and others. However, the basic training (exercise) is based on pure classical dance. This gives an opportunity and reason for Pavlina Ivanova, and later to other choreographers, to repeatedly fill in the staff of the Opera House in Bourgas with performers from "Dance Studio R". Subsequently, some of the graduates of "Dance Studio R" were hired as part of the Bourgas Ballet, where they played some of the best roles in the ballet repertoire at the time. These are Anton Binchev, Ivan Padpadakov, Teodora Valkova, Todor Vangelov, Svetlan Nikolov, Nikolay Georgiev and others" (p. 146). Part of the section is dedicated to another Bourgas dance studio - Dune Dance Ensemble, founded by Petya Stoykova in 1986 (pp. 145 - 146).

"Section 6. Artists with contribution to the Bourgas ballet" (pp. 147-157) brings out and articulates the contribution of ballet pedagogues, ballet dancers and choreographers to the development of ballet art in the city. The section also examines in detail ballet education in Bourgas, stressing the importance of the National School for Music and Stage Art (NSMSA) "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov" – Bourgas. Its first ballet class was formed in 2002. (pp. 147-148). Here we should underline that Rosen Metodiev Hicolov himself has lectured at NSMSA on the following subjects: *Classical Dance, Historical Dance, Character Dance, Modern Dance Techniques, Composition and Improvisation, Theory and Methodology of the Subject, Dance History, Acting and Pantomime* (since 2002 till the present; again there).

The Conclusion (158 – 164) brings out important discoveries, observations and analyzes made in the course of the research.

The work is richly illustrated with a large number of tables; it is supplemented with appendices.

The Abstract (31 pages) corresponds to the content of the dissertation.

Of great importance for the development of the proposed research is the large personal archive directly related to the history of ballet art in Bourgas of the doctoral student formed and diligently replenished over the years.

Rosen Metodiev Nikolov's dissertation introduces into Bulgarian musicology and ballet studies newly discovered or little-known facts about the development of ballet art in Bourgas. The confirmations in the Bourgas press and in the Bourgas archives of circumstances known so far are also of exceptional value.

Along with the multifaceted examination of ballet art in Bourgas, the work provides evidence of the significant personal contribution of the dissertation student - as a teacher and choreographer - to the development of ballet art in the city.

Among the contributions of the work are the valuable analyzes of choreographic approaches and decisions, for the implementation of which contribute the professional competencies and interests of Rosen Nikolov: detailed knowledge of the ballet repertoire performed in the city, systematic and in-depth observations of rehearsal processes, premieres, performances, etc. and the thirty-year experience of the doctoral student as a choreographer and ballet pedagogue in Bourgas.

In conclusion, I congratulate the doctoral student, Rosen Metodiev Nikolov, and his supervisor, Prof. DSc Anelia Yaneva, for the successfully completed dissertation, which presents a contribution to the preservation of the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage.

I propose to the members of the esteemed scientific jury to award Rosen Metodiev Nikolov the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the specialty "Musicology and Music Art" (05.08.02), Professional field 8.3. "Music and dance art".

I vote YES.

April 19, 2020, Sofia

Miglena Tsenova,
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