

## OPINION

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stefka Venkova

Institute of Art Studies - BAS

On the dissertation of Rosen Metodiev Nikolov

*Doctoral student at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS on the subject:*

### **DEVELOPMENT OF BALLET ART IN BOURGAS**

for acquiring the educational and academic degree "Doctor",

Scientific specialty: "Musicology and Music Art"

PF 8.3 "Music and Dance Art"

*Academic supervisor: Prof. DSc Anelia Yaneva*

The dissertation of Rosen Nikolov is the first comprehensive study of the history and present development of ballet art in Bourgas. The importance of the topic is indisputable both from the point of view of the insufficiently studied issues so far and due to the fact that it is part of the concept and long-term work of the research group "Musical Theater" in the "Music" Department of the Institute of Art Studies at BAS on the systematization and publishing activities connected with the history of the musical theater in our country. It is important to note that the doctoral student collaborates on the multi-volume edition "Bulgarian Musical Theater", which allows him to gain experience and knowledge.

The main goal of the study is formulated in the Introduction: to realize "a systematized and substantiated work about the initial steps, the establishment and development of ballet in Bourgas in its overall profile", as the aim is to trace the "overall development of Bourgas ballet" and to point out "the *distinctions and specificities* in the repertoire and in the creative experiments of the choreographers" (p. 7). The organization of the text, proposed by the dissertation, as well as the choice of the historiographical approach of the research, logically reflect the set goal. The text is organized into six sections, introduction and conclusion, a total of 192 standard pages, including four appendices and a bibliography. This dissertation has high scientific qualities - logically structured text; clearly stated subject, goals and methods of the research; placing the issues under consideration in the context of music history; detailed analytical and comparative work with the presented ballet productions and performing groups.

Here I would like to note that the musical research interests of R. Nikolov are backed by solid choreographic, teaching and staging activities. Created and led by him "Dance Studio R" - Bourgas, whose graduates join the Bourgas Opera, his work as a

lecturer in the disciplines of *Classical Dance, Historical Dance, Characteristic Dance, Contemporary Dance Techniques, Composition and Improvisation, Theory and Methodology of the Subjects, History of Dance, Acting and Pantomime* in NSMSA "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov"- Bourgas, as well as a director of ballet and dance performances, is a serious professional foundation on which to build up.

R. Nikolov's dissertation contains valuable historical information, and its collection and systematization is a key merit of the doctoral student. Different periods are distinguished, starting from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Emphasis is placed on important events for the development of ballet art in Bourgas. The mechanisms of maintaining the ballet troupe of the Bourgas Opera in the present are revealed, and they include combining professional ballet art with amateur private dance formations.

Section 1. *Prerequisites for interests in dance in Bourgas (late 19<sup>th</sup> - mid 20<sup>th</sup> century)* to me is of special interest because it coincides with my research work in recent years on the musical life in our country from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is approached competently and conscientiously, with special attention devoted to the collection and systematization of various information. This is an indisputable contribution to the better study and comprehensive coverage of this important period for modern musicology. Given the imperatively imposed ideological paradigm in the period 1944-1989 with regard to the study of previous decades, it is gratifying that R. Nikolov is one of the researchers who today impartially and professionally develops and analyzes these years of musical creation and lays the foundations of Bulgarian musical culture.

Section 2. *Amateur Opera-Bourgas. The first ballet performance* presents comprehensive information and considers in a musical-historical context the first amateur ballet performance.

Section 3. *Classical ballet repertoire at the State Opera-Bourgas* and Section 4. *Contemporary choreography at the State Opera-Bourgas* follow the ballet activity in the already nationalized opera in Bourgas. A comprehensive understanding of the classical and contemporary repertoire, as well as the staging approaches and distinguished choreographers are presented.

Section 5. *Contemporary dance formations with non-state funding* briefly consider the activity of the "Dance Studio R" led by R. Nikolov, which is oriented towards contemporary choreography. Dancers from the studio are involved in productions of the State Opera - Bourgas, and individual performances are staged as well. The Dune Dance Ensemble is also studied.

Section 6. *Artists with a contribution to the Bourgas Ballet* focuses on the individual contribution of ballet teachers, ballet dancers and choreographers to the development of ballet art in the city. Here attention is paid to the ballet training in the city, carried

out in NSMSA "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov", in which the teaching activity of R. Nikolov has its important place.

The formulated findings in the Conclusion, as well as the stated contributions of the dissertation work in the abstract, determine the important achievements for the research both in terms of scientific novelty and in terms of interpretation of already known information.

The bibliography is extensive and well structured. The abstract includes all the necessary elements, fully and adequately reflecting the content of the work. Undoubtedly satisfactory is the large number of publications of R. Nikolov - seven, four of them in scientific (including one in a refereed edition) and three in popular science publications, as well as the many participations in academic forums.

In order to clarify the text in its publication, which I strongly support, I would recommend on p. 13 to correct the name of Svetlozar Eldarov (and not Elbarov), as well as in the citation on the same page and in the bibliography (p. 179) - the title of his book "Catholics in Bulgaria 1878–1989. Historical research. Sofia: International Center for the Study of Minorities and Cultural Interactions in Bulgaria, 2002". Also to correct and edit the few existing punctuation omissions, such as the spelling of "State Opera - Bourgas" not with a hyphen, but with a dash.

I would like to especially congratulate the research supervisor Prof. Dr. Anelia Yaneva for her professional work.

I evaluate positively the long-term practical activities, research, systematization and achieved scientific results performed by the doctoral student. Having in mind the contributive nature of the dissertation, I **give my positive assessment** of it and propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Rosen Metodiev Nikolov the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in Musicology and Music Art, professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art.

April 12, 2021

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stefka Venkova