

OPINION

by Prof. Ivanka Vlaeva, DSc
South-West University "Neofit Rilski"
for the candidacy of Ch. Assist. Prof. Diana Danova-Damyanova, PhD
for selection of an academic position of "Associate Professor"
in "Musicology and musical art"
(contemporary Bulgarian musical culture and festival practices)
in a professional field 8.3. Music and dance art
announced by the Music Department, Research Group "Musical culture and
information" in the State Gazette no. 41 / 20.05.2025

One candidate participated in the competition – Senior Assistant Professor PhD Diana Ivanova Danova-Damyanova from the Research Group "Music Culture and Information", Music Department, Institute of Art Studies – BAS. The submitted documentation for the competition fully meets the requirements of the Law (ZRASRB). The activities indicated by the candidate meet the minimum national scientometric indicators for holding the academic position "Associate Professor" in Area 8. Arts, Professional field 8.3. Music and dance art and they are in accordance with the area of the announced competition.

Diana Danova-Damyanova has many years of experience as a researcher. Her interests are in the field of contemporary Bulgarian musical culture, as well as in the study of archives (collection, systematization and analysis of archival documents), preservation of cultural heritage, which are related to her work at the Institute of Art Studies. These interests are focused on festival practices. I would also like to note the teaching activity of the candidate in this competition at various levels of general and specialized musical education.

The presented research activities of Diana Danova-Damyanova for the competition are many and diverse. They are listed in several groups of indicators and are in line with the minimum national requirements: A) Dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". C) Habilitation work. D) Published book based on the dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"; 13 studies and articles in peer-reviewed and indexed world-renowned databases and

in specialized publications in the field of arts. E) 13 citations are listed in peer-reviewed monographs and collections and in non-peer-reviewed journals. F) There also are included: 7 participations in national scientific, educational or artistic projects; 2 textbooks that are used in the school network; an award given by a national professional forum and organization. To the abovementioned, I will add the candidate's participation in 12 scientific forums, related to the main topic of this competition. I would like to emphasize that the activities presented are significantly more than the necessary minimum national requirements.

Diana Danova-Damyanova's scientific research and contributions are in several thematically related areas: The International Festival "Sofia Music Weeks" as a model; contemporary music on the festival stage; Bulgarian performers and festival practices. It is the historical development and transformations of "Sofia Music Weeks" that unites the aforementioned research topics. The overview and analyses on these topics are relevant in the context of the increasingly widespread and multiplication of festival practices in recent decades, both in a national and international context. These scientific studies are presented in the monograph "Sofia Music Weeks". Studies of the festival's history and present. (Sofia: Institute of Art Studies - BAS, 2024) and in 13 studies and articles included in the competition materials.

I will point out the contributions in the habilitation thesis because they are related to the main research subject and present it most comprehensively. The monograph is the first large-scale and comprehensive study of the longest-running international music festival in Sofia. The path to it was traced by previous research and presentation of festival practices by the author, published in a monograph for *Musica Nova – Sofia*.

The text in the habilitation thesis is organized into four studies. They present the new history since its creation in the period 1970 - 2023. The model of the festival and its transformations in the context of time are examined in detail. This is followed by various stages of the functioning of the "Sofia Music Weeks", conditionally, but very figuratively defined as "Rise" (1970-1989), "Recession" (1990-2006),

"Renaissance" (2007-2019) and the next stage of even more active development after 2020. Special emphasis is placed on the personalities with an important role in the festival development and prosperity. The festival organizational structure and program content are examined. Special attention is paid to the Bulgarian repertoire, the strategy in the concerts for the opening and closing of the festival, the performers and especially the young talents. They trace the international interaction and the establishment of the festival as a leader in the country and with international authority in the European Association of Music Festivals. Premiere performances and anniversary concerts are presented chronologically.

I would like to mention some of Diana Danova-Damyanova's researches contributions. An important contribution is the discovery, collection and structuring of numerous documentary materials for the Sofia Music Weeks festival. They form the basis for the reconstruction of the history of this annual festival, which has been an important phenomenon in Bulgarian musical culture for more than half a century. It is this reconstruction that allows to build the model of the festival with its transformations – another significant contribution of Diana Danova-Damyanova's research. A very important achievement is the chronological systematization and analysis of the premiere performances of remarkable works by Bulgarian composers in the period 1978 – 2019 at the festival. They can be used for practical and pedagogical purposes related to Bulgarian music. Another valuable contribution of the texts presented in the monograph are the eight appendices. They systematize and present additional material that can also be used for further research; provide information about the duration of the festival; show political and cultural gravitations in international relations; visualize the strategy for organizing important concerts in the festival cycle; identify significant personalities in Bulgarian composer music through author's and anniversary concerts. The monograph under consideration is illustrated with documentary material with a detailed description. For the first time, some of the found documents, photos, and logos of the festival have been published, which complement the picture of the festival events.

In conclusion, I am confident that the scientific publications submitted for the competition fully meet the requirements of the law (ZRASRB and PPZRASRB). They confirm the high professional qualification of the candidate in the field of the announced competition. On the basis of the contributions and the overall scientific activity of the candidate, I confidently propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to elect Chief Asst. PhD Diana Ivanova Danova-Damyanova for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 8.3. Musical and dance art.

12 October 2025

Prof. Ivanka Vlaeva, DSc