

## OPINION

By Prof. Dr. Tsvetan Nedkov

On the candidature of Assoc. Prof. DSc Alexander Donev participant in the competition for acquiring the academic position of Professor in Film Studies, Film Art and Television, (History of Bulgarian Cinema and Cinema Culture), professional field 8.4. Theatre and Film Art for the needs of the Screen Arts Department of the Institute of Art Studies – BAS in connection with the competition announced in the State Gazette (issue 47 / 04.06.2024).

Alexander Donev has made a significant contribution to the contemporary film industry and film studies in Bulgaria. His research interests touch upon many areas of film art - history of cinema, history and theory of the film industry, cinema and contemporary media, sociology of cinema, Bulgarian cinema, film distribution. Associate Professor Donev has submitted two monographs - the habilitation thesis “Zlatan Dudow. The Straight Path to Cinema. From Tsaribrod via Sofia to Berlin”. /Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2023, ISBN:978-619-7619 25-6, and a published book based on a defended dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Science – “Mapping the Untamed Cinematic: Post-1989 Bulgarian Independent, Amateur and Alternative Cinema” (Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2021). The enclosed publications cover the conditions and procedure for obtaining scientific degrees and for holding academic positions at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS - the reference includes 12 academic publications made after the post-doctoral stage, of which 6 are in "refereed and peer-reviewed journals or in international scientific journals"; 10 participations in academic conferences, of which 7 are international, as well as 16 citations in scientific publications.

Apart from being a distinguished film scholar, Assoc. Prof. DSc Donev has professional experience as a director, screenwriter and producer, and he has won awards for his cinema works. He is a member of the European Film Academy, the Union of Bulgarian Filmmakers and the Union of Bulgarian Journalists. Donev is the creative director of the most important film festival in Bulgaria - *Golden Rose*. He is the author of several books and monographs, including “Cinema Independents. From Edison to Netflix” (2019) and “Ask the Audience. Bulgarian Films and Their Audiences at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (2018); studies – “Contemporary

Asocial Bulgarian Documentary Cinema”; “The Film *Lesson* in the Context of Bulgarian Independent Cinema at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; “The Performative Aesthetics of Christo and Jeanne-Claude”, etc. They extend the boundaries of his research beyond the narrow segment of cinema by integrating other arts. His work in the Screen Arts Department of the Institute of Art Studies - BAS is a prerequisite for deepening the academic approach to the development and state of cinema in Bulgaria.

Assoc. Prof. DSc Donev was for many years a lecturer at NATFA and New Bulgarian University.

The publications and monograph presented in the academic reference are proof that his contribution to film studies is significant.

The monograph dedicated to Zlatan Dudow is an extensive study of a half-forgotten significant figure in the history of Bulgarian cinema. It concentrates on the first 22 years of the life of the future author of *Kuhle Wampe*, or *To Whom Does the World Belong?* (1932), the first high-quality proletarian art film made in Western Europe. Aleksandar Donev has conducted serious research, and in addition to new historical facts and biographical information, he has developed an interesting new perspective on Dudow's contribution to Bulgarian, German and world cinema. The film *Kuhle Wampe*, foundational to Dudow's work, has been studied in film schools in Germany, but is virtually unknown in Bulgaria outside film scholar circles. Considering *Kuhle Wampe* in the context of world cinema, recalling the importance of the Bulgarian director for the development of film art through the prism of his growth as a filmmaker is quite important. The main contributions of the monographic research consist in highlighting the factors that determined the personality, creative and ideological profile of the film author and intellectual of European scale Zlatan Dudow. And in this way the cultural and ideological atmosphere in the provincial town of Tsaribrod from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the First World War, as well as in the Bulgarian capital during the difficult post-war years until the mid-1920s, could be successfully characterized.

The articles that Alexander Donev has attached to his candidacy for a professorship also deal with unexplored topics, fundamental for film studies in our country today. The comparative analysis of the distribution and production of films in the late 1970s and 1980s and today's situation in the article “Reasoning and Profile of Bulgarian Socialist Blockbuster Cinema” shows trends that go beyond the narrow field of film studies and have value in an integrated perception of historical facts, explaining some fluctuations of the social context today. This analysis, which has the potential for a future monograph, may become the basis for further research by scholars from

different fields of historical knowledge to make a cultural atlas of the development of social sentiment in the era of late socialism and the years of transition.

The article “The emergence of film distribution in Bulgaria as a metamorphosis” explores and explains the process of the formation of the film distribution institution in Bulgaria in the period from the end of the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the outbreak of the First World War - a topic that is rarely addressed in such detail, again related to unexplored territories in the history of Bulgarian cinema.

Associate Professor Donev is one of the well-recognized authors of academic publications on world and Bulgarian cinema not only in Bulgaria. An additional contribution of his scholarly activity is the popularization of Bulgarian art abroad, both during important scientific conferences and with publications in specialized art journals.

In conclusion, I express my conviction that the level of academic and research activity and the scientific metrics of Assoc. Prof. Alexander Donev fully meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and all legal regulations for its implementation for holding the academic position of "professor". I recommend the members of the Scientific Council to vote positively for the election of Assoc. Prof. DSc Alexander Donev to the academic position of Professor in the professional field of Theatre and Film Arts.

10.10.2024

Prof. Dr. Tsvetan Nedkov: