

# OPINION

By Prof. Dr. Joanna Minkova Spassova-Dikova

Institute of Art Studies – BAS

e-mail [joanasd@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:joanasd@yahoo.co.uk)

on 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,

candidate DSc Alexander Donev

Associate Professor at the Institute of Art Studies – BAS

In connection with a competition

announced in the State Gazette (issue 47 / 04.06.2024)

I have known personally Assoc. Prof. DSc Alexander Donev for many years - as a media figure and colleague at the Institute of Art Studies, as well as the head of the project "CINEMA. Film Culture, Arts and National Images. Bulgaria 1920-1940 (KINO.BG). The Formation of the Social Significance of Film Culture between the Two World Wars", at the NSF, where I am a team member. In recent years, I have followed with keen interest his academic career, which he started after many years of professional work as a film critic, journalist, screenwriter, director, consultant, producer, etc., when he also conducted serious research work.

Donev obtained his master's degree at NATA (now NATFA) in film studies, film criticism, history and theory of cinema in 1988. In 2016, he received his doctorate in film studies, cinema art and television at the Institute of Art Studies (IAS). From 2017 to 2020 he was a specialist in the Screen Arts Department, IAS, and from 2021 to the present he holds the academic position of Associate Professor in the same sector. Since 2022, he has acquired the academic degree "Doctor of Science".

His research interests include history of cinema, history and theory of the film industry, cinema and contemporary media, sociology of cinema, history and development of Bulgarian cinema.

He is the author of the monograph, *The Return of the Audience. Bulgarian Films and Their Audiences at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2018); *"Cinema Independents. From Edison till Netflix"* (2019); *"Mapping the Untamed Cinematic: Post-1989 Bulgarian Independent, Amateur and Alternative Cinema"* Institute of Art Studies (2021); *"Zlatan Dudow. The Straight Path to Cinema. From Tsaribrod via Sofia to Berlin,"* Institute of Art Studies (2023). He has several publications in academic and specialized publications. As of 2018, 4 of them are in WoS and 5 in ERIH PLUS.

Assoc. Prof. Donev has significant activity as a producer and manager. He has been Executive Director of Audio-Video Orpheus EAD and EA National Film Centre at the Ministry of Culture; Manager of a film distribution company; marketing consultant; Deputy Program Director and Chief Program Selector at the Bulgarian National Television; Media Planning Manager at a film distribution company; Manager of *Narodna Kultura* Publishing House, Ministry of Culture, Editor of *Kino* magazine of the Union of Bulgarian Filmmakers.

He has professional experience as a director, writer and producer. He won the Bulgarian Film Academy Award as a producer of the animated film "How Sirdel Made Repairs" (2015), was nominated for the Sofia Award as a director of the film "The Poet Ivan Peychev - An Incredible Gladiator" (2016) <https://bnt.bg/bg/a/poetat-ivan-pejchev-edin-neveroyaten-gladiator-10-12-2016>.

Donev is a member of the European Film Academy, Union of Bulgarian Filmmakers, Union of Bulgarian Journalists, Union of Germanists in Bulgaria. He was awarded with the prize of the Union of Translators in Bulgaria (SPB) for the best translation of a humanitarian text (together with Gergana Furkova) for the translation of Walter Benjamin's *Essays on Media Aesthetics* (2022).

Leads and participates in projects. Guest lecturer in various disciplines at the Department of Film Studies and Film Drama at NATFA, where he has taught since 1994.

This extremely rich managerial, teaching, professional experience in the field of film and media culture is of great importance for both his pedagogical and research work.

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The presented publications cover the required scientific metrics for the acquisition of the academic position "Professor" in the field of the required developments under indicators V.3. and G.8. - G.11. in the direction "Art" under ADASRB.

They are:

Monograph:

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, 200 pp.

Articles and papers:

1. Donev, A., The emergence of film distribution in Bulgaria as a metamorphosis. In: *ART READINGS Thematic Peer-reviewed Art Studies Annual, Volumes I–II 2023. II. New Art. – METAMORPHOSIS*, Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2024, ISSN:1313-2342, 459-465. WoS

2. Donev, A. Reasoning and Profile of Bulgarian Socialist Blockbuster Cinema. IN: RETHINKING THE THEATRE HERITAGE FROM THE TIME OF COMMUNISM. Proceedings of the conference, Varna 4-5 June 2023, Homo Ludens Foundation, Homo Ludens Foundation, 2024, ISBN:978-619 90678-5-7, 107-115.

3. Donev, A., Angelova, E Gender Gap In the Bulgarian Film Industry. In NEW PERSPECTIVES AND INTERVENTIONS: THE STATE OF PLAY IN CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY OF THE ARTS - Special issue of the Journal SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS, one, No. 1 / 2024, INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIOLOGY AT THE BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, 2024, ISSN:0324-1572, 72-99. ERIH PLUS

4. Donev, A. Heimat und Ausland. Slatan Dudows Wanderjahre (1919–1946). In: Westwärts. Osteuropäische Filmschaffende in Westeuropa, edition text + kritik, 2023, 109-122.

5. Donev, A. A short introduction to a theatrical memoir. In. WHEN ARTISTS PUT UP THEIR MAKEUP ON CANDLELIGHT. Pages from the history of provincial theatres /personal memoirs/, FunTesi Ltd, 2021, ISBN:978 619-91267-4-5, 5-10.

6. Donev, A. Vasil Gendov: Towards the theatrical biography of a pioneer of Bulgarian cinema/ Vasil Gendov - approaches to the theatrical biography of a pioneer of Bulgarian cinema. In: ART READINGS Thematic Peer-reviewed Art Studies Annual, Volumes I-II 2021. II. New Art. 2022: PERSONALIA, Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2022, ISSN:1313-2342, ISBN 978 619-7619-29-4, 310-317.

7. Donev, A. Vassil Gendov's Bay Ganyo (1922) - a fragment or almost completely preserved, accidentally or deliberately forgotten? In: KULTURA.BG/WEB, 2022

The monographic study of Assoc. Prof. DSc Donev "Zlatan Dudow. The Straight Path to Cinema. From Tsaribrod via Sofia to Berlin" is a contribution to Bulgarian film studies. It is a historical and theoretical interpretation of a series of unknown or misinterpreted facts from the biography of Zlatan Dudow (1903-1963), the Bulgarian film director with the most successful career in world cinema in the twentieth century. As the author indicates, this book is the first part of a larger study and focuses on the first 22 years of Dudow's life. It examines archival documents and publications from various eras, unearths a variety of facts and evidence that condition Zlatan Dudow's ideological and artistic development, and charts the trajectory of his artistic, aesthetic, and ideological views. A particular highlight is the analysis of his correspondence with Brecht, which was particularly intense in the years between 1934 and 1940, when Dudow continued to collaborate with the great playwright from his exile refuge in Paris.

The work is a series of historical and biographical studies and articles (8 in number) with a total length of 130 pages. There are also two blocks of documentary appendices. The bibliography contains 49 sources. There is an index of the names and films mentioned in the monograph.

Individual studies are devoted to various aspects of Zlatan DudoW's life and work, as well as to the reception of his works and attitudes to his personality. Such questions as whether the Bulgarian director who worked abroad was neglected and underestimated; what is the path of a creative personality; what are, the factors that influence its formation; through what peripeties of life and creative path passes to reach socio-political awareness and creative maturity are raised. In my opinion, the appendices are very valuable, namely Peter Uvaliev's talk on BBC radio in 1987 under the title "Zlatan Dudow's Kuhle Wampe", as well as Zlatan Dudow's articles in the magazine *Nasheto Kino* (Our Cinema), published from September 1924 to April 1925.

It is important to note that the book makes a successful attempt to create a model for a biographical study of the creative and personal formation of a film author, realized against the background of the development of cinema in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Important is the analysis of the factors of this formation: the influence of birthplace, ancestral and family environment, educational institutions and personalities of teachers, cultural atmosphere and artistic life, historical, social and political processes.

One of the great merits of the work is its spirit of discovery and criticism, insofar as it is based on research in archives diverse in type, nationality and location, and on a considerable number of literary sources and periodicals that have been carefully selected, filtered, analyzed and refined from a contemporary perspective. Although the monograph is made up of individual studies, the author manages to create a relatively comprehensive narrative explaining key events in the early years of Zlatan Dudow's career that form the basis for his later views and achievements in the field of film art.

The other seven articles and studies submitted for the competition are varied in nature, but outline the broad spectrum of the candidate's academic interests, his rich erudition, his in-depth knowledge in various fields such as film distribution policies in Bulgaria; the logic and typology of the series of high-budget historical super-productions at the time of socialism in Bulgaria; new perspectives for the development of the arts and the Bulgarian film industry in particular in the light of cultural sociology, in order to measure the attitudes among the representatives of different film professions towards the problems of inequalities; the history of Bulgarian cinema, refracted through individual personalities and their creative quests, by discovering new archives and facts, etc.

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Some scholarly contributions of Assoc. Prof. DSc Donev, but I would like to point out that I fully agree with the contributions of the candidate as a result of his research.

I will focus only on some of them.

In the period after his doctorate and later - the defense of his Doctor of Science degree, Donev turned to serious and in-depth studies of the earlier history of Bulgarian cinema and the formation of the national film culture. He himself considers his monographic research a new stage in his development as a scholar. In his more recent research into less explored fields in film studies, Donev has developed new methodologies related, for example, to situating personal life events and artifacts within a broad panorama of social, cultural, and artistic life. The scholar seeks to integrate the principle of historicity, i.e., the judgment of specific phenomena and processes in the context of the knowledge, views, understandings, and individual motivations of the actors in each era. He alternates the perspective that most closely corresponds to the viewpoint of the historical figure with that of the objective, well-researched modern scholar. Also, one of the contributions is the following of the phenomenological perspective of "consequentiality" (Husserl), in which any scientific object is situated in some objective sequence of events related to some background and subsequent impacts and reflections. Donev as a researcher quite rightly recognizes and analyzes the deep interconnectedness of the problems of production and creativity with the question of reception of works and communication with the public.

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In view of the already highlighted qualities of Associate Professor, DSc Alexander Donev as a researcher and scholar in the field of cinema art and cinema culture, as well as the contributions in the presented materials, I give a positive evaluation and support his candidacy for the academic position of "Professor" in "Film Studies, Film Art and Television (History of Bulgarian Cinema and Cinema Culture)", IAS.

15. 10. 2024

Signature:

Prof. Dr. Joanna Spassova-Dikova