

OPINION

ON THE COMPETITION FOR ACQUIRING THE ACADEMIC POSITION PROFESSOR

By Prof. Dr. Martin Venets Dimitrov, Department of Preproduction and Production, Faculty of Screen Arts – NATFA “Kr. Sarafov”, professional direction 8.4 Theater and Film Art, academic specialty Film Studies, Film Art and Television (Film and Television Cinematography)

On the academic-research work of

Assoc. Prof. DSc ALEXANDER DONEV ANGELOV candidate for 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, announced in the State Gazette (issue 47 / 04.06.2024) for the needs of the Screen Arts Department of the Institute of Art Studies in accordance with ord. N419 from July 1st, 2024, of the director Prof. Dr. Joanna Spassova-Dikova

The grounds for the review are the decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Art Studies (Minutes No. 6, item 6/21.06.2024), Order No. 419 - RD/1 July 2024 and the protocol decision of the scientific jury from the first meeting held on 09.08.2024.

The submitted CV in European format informs us that Associate Professor DSc Alexander Donev graduated from NATFA "Kr. Sarafov" in 1988 with a degree in Film Studies, Film Criticism, History and Theory of Cinema. In the period 2011-2016 he defended his PhD in "Film Studies, Film Art and Television" at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Assoc. Prof. DSc Donev is a film theorist and researcher and is actively involved in the film-making process as well as the distribution of films. He has held management positions in various organizations related to the production, management, and distribution of Bulgarian films. Among the institutions where he has worked are the National Film Centre Executive Agency, Audio-Video Orpheus EAD, Bulgarian National Television and Alexandra Group Holding Ltd. His solid administrative and research experience gives significance to the presented monograph, which is a solid and large-scale work.

For the purposes of the competition, Assoc. Prof. DSc Alexander Donev presents the research work *Zlatan Dudow: the Straight Path to Cinema* which was presented and published in the framework of the 2023 Sofia Film Fest. This monograph, through a historical and theoretical interpretation, examines the early life and career of filmmaker Zlatan Dudow (1903-1963), focusing on the connections between his individual experiences and his views on the individual, society, and the world.

The monograph offers an in-depth analysis of the cultural and social environment in Tsaribrod, Sofia and Berlin, revealing the factors that shaped Dudow's artistic path from his young years to his educational and professional start. The study looks at a film director not well known to the public in Bulgaria, who established himself with an impressive international career in the twentieth century.

The material is based on extensive archival research in international data stocks, which for the first time allows for a comprehensive presentation and analysis of Dudow's publications in *Nasheto Kino* magazine, as well as other key documents from his biography. The main aim of this research is to trace and elucidate the influences that shaped his worldview and artistic views. The work also seeks to chart a clear direction for his development as an artist and intellectual.

The study is organized into several main parts that mark this thorough and rich archival work.

- Chapter One: Examines the essay on the significance of the film *Khule Wampé*, written as a talk for BBC Radio in 1987 by the well-known Bulgarian intellectual and film critic Peter Uvaliev. In it, he analyses the historical significance of the film as well as its influence on future generations of filmmakers. He examines the film from a social, political and cinematic perspective, which enriches and expands the analysis. The inclusion of a figure such as Peter Uvaliev in the monograph of Assoc. Prof. DSc Alexander Donev is impressive as it expands the study with additional informational depth and cultural perspective. Uvaliev's presence adds weight to the work, supporting it with his authoritative critical opinion and established expertise in the field of cinema. The fact that Uvaliev personally knew Dudow and had direct impressions of him, as well as the incidents included in the article, provide an authentic insight into the director's personality and role in European cinema. The essay in the monograph provides readers with a historical and aesthetic context for the significance of this film in world cinema history and makes its connection to the Bulgarian cultural milieu.
- Chapter Two: Introduction - through this the author builds the main theses of his research and reveals the reasons why Zlatan Dudow has remained in the

shadows, despite his significant contribution to world cinema. The idea of this chapter is to highlight the monograph's attempt to correct the unfair underestimation and neglect of Dudow in both international and Bulgarian social environment. The main reason is the ideological clichés related to the political conjuncture and the period in which the director worked in Germany - a time of social turmoil. Due to these facts, the existing biographies present him mainly as an artist committed to communist ideology, neglecting key aspects of his life and work. Through this introduction, Assoc. Prof. DSc Donev declares his intention to present a fuller and much more diverse picture of Dudow's personality and work.

- Chapter Three: The Straight Path to Cinema - this part is dedicated to Zlatan Dudow's early years and how the environment in Tsaribrod and Sofia shaped his views. It traces how his education in Bulgaria, as well as his early experiences as a youth in Germany, prepared him for his creative career in Berlin. Special attention is given to his relationship with cultural circles and how the Bulgarian and German intellectual atmosphere influenced the formation of his political and aesthetic ideas. The monograph makes clear that despite Brecht's great influence, Dudow played a key role in the creation of their joint projects, the most significant of which was the film *Khule Wampe*. Although the credit for the film has been attributed entirely to Brecht, the author emphasizes that Dudow, in addition to directing, was in fact the main leading figure behind many of the technical and creative decisions in the film. Assoc. Prof. DSc Donev examines Dudow's revolutionary theoretical views on filmmaking, for example his approach to cinema as an "industry of film directors" and how they influenced subsequent generations of filmmakers. The study analyses key films, with a particular focus on *Khule Wampe*, which reveals the working class and the existence of social injustice in Germany during the Great Depression. The film is considered a precursor to neorealism and had a profound impact on the development of political cinema in Europe. The focus is on the film's original language, the social insight of its subjects and its ability to combine artistic and political aims.

Assoc. Prof. DSc Alexander Donev applies a systematic and analytical approach, combining archival sources, historical data and contemporary theories. This demonstrates a high level of academic training, ability for critical and research thinking, and these are key qualities for academic work. The author has a deep conviction, supported by the facts presented in the book, that Dudow, though

underappreciated, is a figure of great importance in world cinema. With his work, Assoc. Prof. DSc Alexander Donev demonstrates that, in addition to being an academic study, this is also a sincerely personal and professional commitment aimed at rethinking and reordering the facts of Dudow's life to restore his deserved place in the film and cultural community.

In his monograph, the researcher makes significant contributions that are relevant to both Bulgarian and international film studies. Some of them are:

- Comprehensive and original archival research with the addition of new documentation.
- A reassessment of Dudow's role in world cinema
- Correcting historical inaccuracies and misinterpretations.
- A significant contribution to our film history by restoring Dudow's significant figure in Bulgarian culture.
- Connecting Dudow to broader cinematic themes and in-depth analysis of *Khule Vampé*.

Conclusion:

The monograph of Assoc. Prof. DSc Alexander Donev is an impressive scientific work with an innovative topic, rich in facts and with clear value. I believe that his work *Zlatan Dudow: The Straight Path to Cinema* is a serious and thorough study of an important topic in the history of cinema, with the facts presented accurately and analyzed thoroughly. His work shows impressive academic and research skills that deserve the highest praise. Assoc. Prof. Donev has established himself as a leading expert in the field of film history and theory, and his monograph is a valuable contribution to both Bulgarian and world film history.

I strongly vote **YES** for his nomination and propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Art Studies Assoc. Prof. DSc Alexander Donev Angelov to be elected to the academic position of **PROFESSOR** in the scientific field 8.4. Theatre and Film Art, scientific specialty Film Studies, Film Art and Television.

Prof. Dr. Martin Dimitrov

20.10.2024 г.

