

REVIEW

by **Prof. Veneta Doycheva**, member of the scientific jury in a competition for procedure for occupying an academic position Assistant Professor in the professional field 8.2 Fine Arts. Specialty: History of Costume and Scenography, published in the State Gazette, 26.07.2019.

for **Dimitar Vodenicharov**, participant in the competition,

Dr Dimitar Vodenicharov is an established artist in the field of plastic arts. He is well educated (he graduated the specialized high school in the town of Smolyan and has Master's degree in Scenography from the National Academy of Art in Sofia). His biography includes various activities as an artist, teacher and theatre expert. He has won various awards, has participated in collective exhibitions in Bulgaria and abroad (Czech Republic, Belgium, Germany, Austria, France), and has participated in the traditional Autumn Exhibitions in Plovdiv. His artistic work covers different genres - painting, drawing, graphics, set design, installation, interior design, lighting effects, puppetry, cinema and more. He is the author of the independent study "*Aesthetic and Technological Practices in Stage Lighting in the European Theatre* (from the last quarter of the XIX to the second half of the XX century)", Plovdiv, 2019. He is a teacher at the National High School of Stage and Film Design, (Stage Lighting course), at AMDFA as a part-time lecturer (Scenography and Costume Design, Costume History, Stage Equipment and Technology).

Dr Dimitar Vodenicharov participates in the competition with his research and artistic works, in accordance with the framework of scientometric data and the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic and scientific position of "Associate Professor". All requirements of the law are met and the applicant meets the standards for this competition.

Among the listed author's set and costume designs and lighting solutions, Dimitar Vodenicharov points out productions in dramatic and puppet theatres, as well as work in film production.. These include important creative partnerships with directors such as Leonard Capon (a stable collaboration, the product of which has been performed in puppets and dramatic theatre), Stefan Moskov, Dimitar Elenov, Atanas Atanasov and others.

For the competition he mentions his work on the costume and set designs for the staging of *Undress!* based on Joe Orton's play *What the Butler Saw*, directed by Krasimir Rankov, Plovdiv Drama Theatre, 2014/2015 season, and the set design for *The Schmuck*, a musical of

Petar Radevski and Leonard Capon by Iva Perzhikova, directed by Leonard Kapon, Plovdiv Drama Theatre, 1995/1996 season.

Undress! is a production of Joe Orton's play *What the Butler Saw*, one of the most successful comedies of this British playwright, which is a textbook example of the ability to build a situation out of misunderstanding and with the accumulation of confusion, character swaps, disguise and displacements, to bring the configuration of relationships to the absurd. The presented stage solution of the artist offers a new, modern era with characteristic elements of the standard (we may call them globally available) elements that make up the scene (doctor's office). The principle of the hyper-realistic beginning in the set design is combined with the principle of light costume theatricality, which creates a clear emphasis on the acting atmosphere and works for the effect of comedial removal. The leading means of expression are the colours in combination of active and strong tonality, in the pavilion environment and in the costumes. The turquoise blue (the walls of the doctor's office) is dominant and more discreet variants of this tonality of the costumes (reseda and grassy green), to dark red, orange, black. Thus, the colour saturates the scene with associations for the social motives and character confusions, while at the same time bringing the action closer to the everyday topos that are recognizable to every viewer today. The set design, in its overall colour scheme, expresses the idea of madness and exaggeration arising from the order of social life and from the personal short-sightedness of everyone in this absurd situational whirlwind.

The other production whose stage design was proposed for the competition is *The Schmuck* – a musical based on a fairy tale, recreated in the Plovdiv Drama Theatre. Here, Dimitar Vodenicharov offers a completely different approach. The active means of expression is the principle of transformation achieved through groupings in the differentiation of space (actively used in the three dimensions of the stage). The second dominant is the metamorphosis of the nature of the images that go through the specifics of different subject matter and reach imagery that touches abstract categories. The scenography mobilizes all the mechanical capabilities of the stage and adds its own technical solutions, in order to produce a theatrical image built on the idea of fairy-tale metamorphosis and the power of imagination, which can turn into poetry even the most trivial thing. The author's view of the set designer uses an ingenious combination of geometric principles in the separation of space (a circular stage, divided in its base into micro-spaces with rectangular foundations), and levels (achieved through stairs and created new playgrounds), which by rotating the base and through reducing the heights in front of the viewer's eyes make the cube a pyramid and the

circle cut into angular segments. The careful handling of the materials and textures is also of particular importance for achieving a visually spectacular environment. The main material is wood, used in lightweight structures that create an openwork effect (mainly due to the stairs and supports open in space). Complementing this durable, but creating ethereal impression material, is the system of canvases and curtains that, through ropes and reels, achieves a variety of image variants. The measure between stability and variability in materials is balanced and makes it possible to produce, with quick and easy transitions, stage paintings that are associated with contrasting places (a palace, a ship). In this stage solution D. Vodenicharov cleverly incorporates the active lighting, which tones the visual plans and adds to the impression of fairy-tale reality, which, however, is magical and beautiful, thanks to the human look and creativity. I especially want to emphasize the artist's mastery in the proposed sketches, drawings and scale model for this theatrical solution. The precision in the painting, the confident position of the drawings and the artistry in the execution are an absolute guarantee for high professional level and skills. With these works, the candidate proves that in addition to conceptual thinking, he also possesses skills that seem to be dying out, but can never be devalued, since they are an imprint of the artist's uniqueness and always demonstrate that the hand (not the computer program) is the highest point in the profession of the artist. I am convinced that in his teaching work these personal qualities of D. Vodenicharov are of great benefit to his students.

The candidate also mentions some of his articles dealing with different aspects of theatre, the visual beginning and the set design. The article *Adolphe Appia, first performances of modern theatre* (Homo Ludens Magazine, issue 22, 2019), focuses on the concept of illumination in the theory and practice of A. Appia and the importance of his ideas for the European theatre. Vodenicharov traces the chronology of an innovative thinking about the role of light in the theatrical production, expressed in Appia's theory of light as an active theatrical element and as a means of expression that has its own unique properties. The article outlines the dynamics of his experiments and emphasizes the distancing of the idea of the light from the front and open illumination in favour of a diffuse light tone, also achievable with new technical inventions. Another important focus of the article is the attention to the lighting in Appia's understanding and the close connection with the problems of the actor and the human figure on the stage, as well as the complex effects that the light provokes on every surface (plane or relief) and the theatrical reformer's insistence on an active attitude to this plastic problem.

The article *Three scenographic solutions for "light" theatrical genre* (Collection of Spring Scientific Readings, AMDFA, 2019) combines a research objective view with a summarized

creative experience of the author in dealing with a stage task from the field of the so-called "light" theatrical genre. As obvious from the first lines, the musical is clearly seen as a theatrical practice, and in particular three productions on the stage of Plovdiv Drama Theatre (*The Schmuck, God is Innocent and The Wizard of Oz*), directed by L. Capon with the music of Petar Radevski (*The Schmuck, God is Innocent*). The article comments the foundations of the challenge in this stage task, which is cited as a problem for creating a vivid and spectacular stage vision, corresponding to the subject matter, the music and the theme of the libretto. D. Vodenicharov considers three fundamentally different stage-costume approaches and emphasizes as the main creative problem the theatricalization of the musical beginning, as an important element of this stage genre. In depth, but also with ease, it offers three options, based on three different dominant principles. *The Schmuck* is developed in the aesthetics of combining the structure of fairy-tale metamorphosis with thematic motifs that are close to the excitement of adolescents (freedom, honesty, justice), and a visual aesthetics, which expresses this problem through rotations of the structure, providing dynamics and wide associativity of the stage action. *God is Innocent* stands on diametrically different beginnings - the light contrast and the blending of plastic aesthetics (sharp direct lighting and dynamics of spectacular colour plans and different light temperature) are leading here. Another powerful means of expression is the play of proportions and volumes (between a real and an artificially altered human figure). *The Wizard of Oz* mixes the strong possibilities of suggesting colours and fabrics that can be used in different effect plans – artificial fabrics, cotton canvases – they can build a changing picture and create the impression of instant transformation of the material, that "hardens" or "lightens" in front of the viewer's eyes and contribute to the magical environment of the fairy tale. The costumes, which offer a theatrical version of the garment as an "assemblage", also contribute to the idea of movement over time, and correspond to the wider associative circles of dramaturgy.

The article *Historical Analysis of Stage Lighting* (collection of Spring Scientific Readings, 2012, Plovdiv) traces in chronological order the presence of light in the theatrical performance. In addition to the factual information about the technical and instrumental carriers of light sources, the article analyses the effects and possible artistic uses of lighting in theatrical performance. It explores the specific possibilities that each convention of a stage organization assigns to the theatrical lighting, as well as the connection of the light presence with the auditorium and the acting. Lighting is discussed not only from a technological and scenic point of view, but also as an element of the broader aesthetic understanding of each great theatrical era, as an artistic system and as a social phenomenon.

Dimitar Vodenicharov also presents his participations as artist in various exhibitions, each realized on prestigious territory. The Wittgenstein House (Vienna) organized as a place of Bulgarian culture in 2017-2018 a series of impressive presentation of artists from Plovdiv, as among the classics such as Zlatyu Boyadzhiev, Tsanko Lavrenov, contemporary artists - Vasil Stoev, Stoyan Kutsev, Vasil Margaritov are also presented. Dimitar Vodenicharov with his paintings is a worthy expression of the latest Bulgarian art in this prestigious series. Art Gallery Resonance in Plovdiv (2017) hosts a solo exhibition dedicated to stage designs by Dimitar Vodenicharov, and presents sketches of stages and costumes from realized theatrical performances that reveal him as a master painter and drawer, but through the tasks of the stage thinking.

Dimitar Vodenicharov's artistic work has been a subject of critical reviews and it has been appreciated with prestigious awards. Dimitar Vodenicharov's entire work as a creator, researcher and lecturer meets the requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor", announced with this competition. I vote "YES".