

PEER REVIEW

**for the scientific works and educational activity of Assistant Dr. Elitsa Petrova
Lukanova**

**submitted for participation in a competition for occupation of the academic position
“Associate Professor”**

**under Professional field 8.3. “Music and Dance Arts”, specialty “Ballet Art”,
announced in State Gazette, Issue 52 dated 05.07.2022, for the needs of Prof. Asen
Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv**

**Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariya Petrova Kardzhieva, Chernorizets Hrabar Free
Varna University**

under Professional field 8.3. “Music and Dance Arts”, specialty “Choreography”

The present peer review was prepared on the basis of documents received on the occasion of a competition announced by Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts /State Gazette, Issue 52 dated 05.07.2022/ and on the website of the Academy for the needs of the Choreography Department at the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography. The documents presented under the competition comply with the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation. The competition procedure has been correctly followed.

Only one candidate has submitted documents to participate in the competition, namely Dr. Elitsa Petrova Lukanova, Assistant at the Choreography Department with the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. The following are attached: certificate for fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Art.26, para.2 and para.3 and under Art.26, para.5 of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as materials meeting the terms and conditions for occupation of an academic position at the Academy. The participant in the competition offers a sufficient number of scientific and artistic production that has not been used in other competitions, namely: a total of five titles, including one monograph, three publications in refereed scientific publications and a published book based on a defended dissertation work for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”. The following evidence has been provided for the competition: diplomas for the degrees of education; certificate of work experience; study load report; author’s reference for scientific contributions; citations; participation in a

collective product in the field of arts; participation in an educational and artistic project; workshop guide.

Elitsa Petrova Lukanova was born on 15.08.1969 in the City of Sofia. She received her first basic knowledge in the field of ballet in the period 1979-1984 at the State Choreographic School. Immediately after that, she was admitted to the Agrippina Y. Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet – St. Petersburg, Russia, where in 1987 she acquired secondary special education “Artist-Ballerina”. This was followed by a successful artistic career in the period 1988-2015 at the Sofia Opera. In the same period, she completed her higher education at Prof. Pancho Vladigerov National Academy of Arts in Sofia, after which she followed the path of her parents – the famous Liliyana Draguleva and Petar Lukanov, as a ballet teacher at the National School of Dance Art in Sofia. Dr. Lukanova has been head of master classes abroad. Since 2016 she has been an Assistant at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv, and since 2017 has been a ballet teacher-choreographer of the Bulgarian Women Rhythmic Gymnastics National Ensemble. In 2019, Dr. Lukanova defended the educational and scientific degree “Doctor of Choreography” at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv with a dissertation on the topic: *“Creation, Development and Comparative Analysis of the Italian, French, Danish, and Russian Ballet Schools”*, with which she begins her scientific work.

Dr. Lukanova’s presented scientific production in the current competition fully communicates her professional/practical profile in the field of classical dance, as an established performer and pedagogue not only in Bulgaria, but also at an international level.

Particular attention should be paid to the habilitation thesis entitled *“Influence of the Russian Ballet School on the Development of Ballet Art in Bulgaria in the 20th century”*, published by Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv, 2022, ISBN 978-619-7682-08-3, 174 pages.

Dr. Elitsa Lukanova’s monograph represents a serious study in the historical aspect of the development of ballet art in Bulgaria, in which the Russian ballet school is the main influence. The factology, which is impressive in terms of volume, is arranged chronologically, thus the author distinguishes individual names who contributed to the development of Bulgarian ballet. Little-known and unknown data is presented about the activities of each “pioneer”, who has devoted his or her passion to the popularization of grace in the art of dance. In Bulgaria, it passed through the rich folklore interpretation to reach the plastic expressiveness of the classical dance. In the integrity of the work, a large volume of information from various printed publications stands out – precisely referenced, which points to the author’s in-depth research work in library archives. The conversations held and quoted in the text further add to the credibility of the events the reader is introduced to. In the present review, only some highlights of the undeniably contributing nature of the research will be noted.

In the first part, “The Dawn of Ballet in Bulgaria”, several Bulgarian names are presented, who connect their activities with the Yunak Physical Culture Society. Special attention is given to Pesho Radoev – founder of the first ballet school, in 1914, who also proposed the first model for a curriculum in the field of Ballet Art. From the very beginning, the work excites with the opening of the curtain for something new – the Bulgarian stepping beautifully, slightly timid, but confident in time: from Folk Dance – Gymnastics – Opera – Modern Dance (for its time) – Ballet – Opera Druzhiba – to Sofia Opera. According to the author, 1920, with the many tours of Russian ballet artists, turned out to be a turning point for ballet in its birth. There was a “fear” in the Bulgarian public of the appearance of a new dance manifestation on the stage. On the other hand, there was also support for the newly appeared plastic influenced by the West. Crossed out is a short period in which Bulgarian performers were more influenced by the modern European school (German), which was in conflict with the Russian one. It is essential to claim that the revolution in Russia temporarily “closed” the classical school, but this opened the doors for young talents from Bulgaria to take advantage of its emigration to Paris, London, etc... In fact, this was the first serious step towards the creation of own performing group, which subsequently would have developed ballet in Bulgaria. Here it is appropriate to say that the textual transition from part to part in the exposition of the work is smooth and logical, which makes it fascinating and easy to read.

The second part of the monograph is devoted to the difficult and at the same time fruitful creative biography of Anastas Petrov – the pioneer in ballet art in Bulgaria. Here, the author very thoroughly introduces us to his personality from early childhood to his peak creative (new for his time) achievements in classical dance – ballet school, author’s interpretations with innovative construction of the artistic image in a storyline, as well as provocateur for the creation of a ballet school with developed curriculum. It is inevitable that Dr. Lukanova will not present the Sofia Opera here – the institution without which ballet will be an “orphan”. She notes that An. Petrov was fortunate to work with professionals in the field of music. The artistic teams of all his productions are presented in great detail, which is a significant contribution to Bulgarian ballet historiography. It is exciting to read about the birth of the first ballet performance “Coppelia”. A fact unknown to the dance fan is brought out – about the “mayhem” in the ballet team after the successful beginning. The ballet dancers, with whom An. Petrov worked with, are also emotionally presented. The fact that the author does not omit them, but emphasizes them, shows her deep interest in the individual and the desire to acquaint the reader with all aspects of Petrov’s activities in maximum detail. In the context of the exposition of the second part, Dr. Lukanova gives new knowledge about the names of Mariya Dimova and Lidia Valkova-Besevic, followed by Max and Margarita Froman, who introduced the audience to classical ballet. As the author notes, *“the scale tilts in favor of the classics, and the German free dance takes a back seat”*. At the end of the piece, the first ballet performance based on folklore

“Dragon and Yana” occupies a place of honor. The summary of Anastas Petrov’s activity is precise, in which the foundation in ballet dance art is emphasized.

In the third part, Dr. Elitsa Lukanova presents the bold steps of the Russian ballet artists Anisimova and Holfin. In this period, which the chronology of the study follows – after the Second World War, from the detailed facts and data it can be seen that in Bulgaria there could be no other influence than the Russian one. The names of the first professional ballet dancers are presented. It is timely to note here that the choice to place “Fountain of Bakhchisarai” by N. Anisimova was not accidental. With this work, she changes the culture of perception in the Bulgarian public about the art of ballet and prepared it for the more complex ballet dramaturgy. In this period, the ballet of the Sofia Opera reached a professional level and there was hope for development, through the created ballet school. Here, the work is filled with reviews and opinions about the artists and performers, who vividly and at times strongly emotionally transported us into the pictures of the individual performances. The choice of this methodological toolkit in the field of arts is apt and is a kind of artifact proving permanence. The research continues with the name of Holfin and his presence in Bulgaria, which is sensational – multi-genre, development of dance technique, development of effective form. The end of this third part is apotheotic with details of the ballet “Haidushka Song”.

The uniqueness of the work is confirmed after each of its parts, but in the fourth part, with Kalina Bogoeva’s stories related to Beliy, this becomes a fact. The vivid narrative in this type of historical research tracing the influence of the Russian ballet school in Bulgaria is a must. The author managed to precisely find its place.

The last part is summarizing – with the exposition of the names that stood out in the development of modern classical ballet in Bulgaria. The reader enters from show to show with the fascinating stories interspersed with a lot of information. The conclusion with Lavrovsky’s “Giselle” and Prof. Petar Lukanov’s words about his long and eternal life on the stage of the Sofia Opera, is completely logical.

The monographic work of Dr. Elitsa Lukanova immerses us in the history of the development and consolidation of ballet culture in small Bulgaria, connected with the names of bright Russian artists and performers who devoted their lives to dance grace in the field of this art. **Ballet runs in Elitsa Lukanova’s blood. We are witnessing another study of hers with encyclopedic value and a contribution to the knowledge of ballet art.**

The submitted publications of the candidate in the competition are a logical reflection of her professional performing and pedagogical work. They highlight achievements of a contributing nature, which can be formulated as follows:

1. For the first time in the scope of scientific research, the history and specifics of professional ballet education in Bulgaria are considered.

2. The development models of classical dance are detailed, comparing them with contemporary trends in dance.
3. The crises in dance art from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 21st century are analyzed.
4. For the first time, the artists who contributed to the birth of the professional ballet art in Bulgaria are presented in detail.

The authorship of the candidate in the presented scientific works is indisputable, written in a scientifically sound style. Qualitative methods were used to collect empirical information, which was processed and analyzed.

The authorship of the candidate in the presented scientific works, written in a scientifically sound style, is indisputable. Qualitative methods were used to collect empirical information, which was processed and analyzed.

The certificate submitted by the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts shows that Assistant Dr. Elitsa Lukanova has a guaranteed academic workload in disciplines corresponding to the announced competition, with the necessary pedagogical experience in the field.

I know Elitsa Lukanova personally. I have reviewed her dissertation work. This approach of hers in the work – of combining practice and its theorizing, with subsequent teaching, is most suitable in building performers and talents in the field of ballet art.

Conclusion

After a thorough familiarization with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, and an analysis of their significance and the scientific and scientific-applied contributions contained therein, I give my **positive assessment** and **recommend** that the Scientific Jury award Assistant Dr. Elitsa Petrova Lukanova with the academic position “Associate Professor” under Professional field 8.3. “Music and Dance Arts” in the specialty “Ballet Art”.

15.10.2022

Reviewer:

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariya Kardzhieva)