

PEER REVIEW

for the procedure for occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor”
Professional field 8.3. “Music and Dance Arts”
Specialty “Bagpipe and its Teaching Methodology”
for the needs of the Musical Folklore Department, Faculty of Musical Folklore and
Choreography at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv
with only candidate: Chief Assistant Dr. Ivan Simeonov Georgiev

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Veselka Toncheva

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Academy of Sciences

The candidate has submitted all the necessary documents for the competition, from which it is clear that he meets the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. He has also attached the relevant evidentiary material illustrating the specific activities and results according to the individual indicators. The impression from the review of the documents is for an active and successful research, teaching and artistic-creative activity.

Scientific and research activities

The main scientific interests of Chief Assistant Dr. Ivan Georgiev are focused on researching various aspects related to the instrument he masters and teaches – the bagpipe. The dissertation work defended by him in 2014 is dedicated to the evolution of the bagpipe style in Bulgaria – a topic on which there are not enough studies, and this is exactly the main contribution of the developed text: to fill this gap in a scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied plan from the position of the author as an acting performer and educator. This text clearly shows I. Georgiev’s in-depth knowledge regarding the performance features characteristic of the bagpipe – the specifics of positioning and construction of the instrument and of sound extraction and intonation. A typology of bagpipe style in Bulgaria is outlined in its dialect varieties and in the dynamics of its development.

In the candidacy for Associate Professor, I. Georgiev appeared with a habilitation thesis on the topic “*The Unachievable Sound of the Bagpipe*” (Zhanet 45 Publishing House, 2022), which is 161 pages long and consists of 14 parts, structured in 5 sections. The study is dedicated to the life, work, and musical heritage of the bagpiper Nikola Atanasov, and throughout the text the personal attitude of the author and his view as an instrumentalist, who gained knowledge and experience from one of the doyens of the Bulgarian bagpipe music, are woven throughout the text. This is exactly the personal approach in the words of the author in the first section “Reflections”, which to a large extent emotionally argue for the selection of the subject and the topic of the study. The following are two reviews of the work by established scholars in the field.

In the “Prologue” section, after the artistic “Bagpipe Introduction”, information about the bagpipe as an instrument is introduced in publications from sources in a wide time range and of different genres (“The Bagpipe in Bulgarian Publications before the “Nikola Atanasov

Phenomenon”). The instrument is examined, and not only in a Bulgarian context, in order to arrive at the place of Nikola Atanasov in the history of Bulgarian bagpipe performance (“About the Bagpipe – Inductively”).

The “Core” section essentially fills in the gaps regarding the life and creative path of Nikola Atanasov, presented in detail in the first three parts of this section – “Topography” of His Life Map”, “Briefly about His Birthplace” and “The Path of the Master through the Eyes of His Father”. The interview with the bagpiper in the section called “Information from the Source” is particularly valuable, as this is really his self-presentation and it is authentic and unadulterated, and contains information that can be interpreted from different points of view. In such a study, dedicated to a person, his “presence” in the form of an interview gives additional vitality, but also density to the text.

The next two parts in this section, focused on the repertoire and performing approaches of N. Atanasov, are highly contributing. In “Touches to the Portrait”, the author illustrates the technical and improvisational qualities of the bagpiper through an ethnomusicological analysis of pieces, such as “Old Father-in-Law Said To Yanka”, “Grancharsko Horo”, and “Markovski Songs”, accompanied by decipherments. Thus, the role of N. Atanasov as one of the Bulgarian folklore performers who surpassed the level of self-activity and laid the foundations for the professionalization of folklore art is highlighted.

“Heritage in the Bulgarian National Radio” presents the recordings of N. Atanasov from the Golden Fund of the National Radio, which is the first publication not only of the information about them, but also of the musical content of certain samples. Attached is a table in which 76 works are systematized by titles, signature number, and duration.

The analysis of “Slow Song and Round Dance” (N. Atanasov), “Buenetsi” (K. Kolev), “Easter Round Dance” (N. Atanasov), “Bagpipe Performer Melodies”, “Gerdem Rachenitsa”, “Dimitar Kara Gemia”, “Dyulgersko Horo”, “Rachenitsa”, and “Bringing Out of the Bride and the Three Times”, bring out the instrumental techniques of N. Atanasov. The selection of the pieces was made by I. Georgiev with a view to revealing the various interpretation techniques that make up the style of this outstanding Bulgarian piper.

In the last section “Epilogue” an “attempt for a “graphological expertise” of the performing handwriting of N. Atanasov is made in the form of synthesized conclusions, which in a concentrated form mark his performing manner, distinguished by metrorhythmic sense, intonation precision and phrasing, attractiveness, dialect persistence, and a bright individual musical presence. In the short “Afterword” at the end, the author expresses his emotion and satisfaction with the created text. Some of Nikola Atanasov’s famous pieces are deciphered in the attached sheet music examples, which is their first publication with sheet music.

The style of the monograph is not strictly scientific and at times the more popular sound, the journalistic tone, and the artistic statement prevail. This makes the research accessible to a wider readership, but in no way diminishes its value and contributions in scientific terms.

Along with the examined monograph, the candidate I. Georgiev also presented three articles related to the bagpipe style and indicated seven citations of his publications and two participations in “The Strangers” project – a very successful cultural seminar organized by the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv, dedicated to the cultural diversity and heritage of the various ethnic, confessional, and linguistic communities in Bulgaria.

Pedagogical and teaching-methodical activity

The teaching activity of I. Georgiev dates back to 2002 as a part-time bagpipe lecturer at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. Since 2010 he has been a regular Bagpipe Assistant, and since 2017, after successfully passing a competition, he has been the Chief Assistant in Bagpipe at the Musical Folklore Department. Among his teaching performances, the master classes in bagpipes, which he conducted at Dobri Hristov National School of Arts – Varna and at Dobri Chintulov Secondary School – Burgas, and also at the XV and XVI Summer Art Academy “The Fire of Orpheus” – Zlatograd, must be highlighted. For five years in a row, I. Georgiev has been a lecturer at the International Summer Folklore Seminar in Plovdiv.

As an expert, I. Georgiev participated in the juries of various folklore forums, such as “Orfeevo Izvorche” – Stara Zagora (2012), “Dinyo Marinov” – Varna (2012-2013), the national meeting of the masters of folk musical instruments “Rodolyubie” – Kotel (2018-2019) and “Magical Rhythms” – Novi Pazar (2021). The candidate’s expert opinion regarding the bagpipe and the art of bagpipes has been presented many times in interviews for the Bulgarian National Television, the Bulgarian National Radio, Radio Burgas, as well as various electronic publications.

Last but not least, his co-authorship in the creation of a teaching aid, which is used in university and school environments, stands out as important in the candidate’s educational and methodological activity. *“Pieces for Bagpipes with Piano Accompaniment”* (co-authored with Mariya Stoyanova, 2008) contains 9 pieces that contribute to modern bagpipe training, for which there is not enough musical literature, especially in view of the growing technical and improvisational capabilities of young instrumentalists.

Creative and artistic activity

As an active bagpipe performer, I. Georgiev has developed an impressive concert activity. He participated as an orchestrator in the accompanying instrumental group of the Mystery of Bulgarian Voices Vocal Ensemble, with which in the period 2002-2014 he participated in over 100 concerts in Bulgaria and abroad. Throughout his career, he actively accompanied the concert performances of the Nightingale Quartet. Particularly significant in the artistic activity of I. Georgiev is his membership since 2008 in the formation Theodosii Spassov Folk Quintet, with which he has participated in over 200 concerts all over the world – nine of these concerts are specifically mentioned in his candidacy, as his tenth appearance was as a guest soloist in the thematic concert “The Art of the Bagpipe”, part of the “Secrets of Bulgarian Instruments” series, realized by the Folk Music Orchestra of the Bulgarian National Radio.

Along with the active concert activity, I. Georgiev has released CDs with the Instrumental Quintet at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts and with the Academic National Orchestra, as well as a solo CD “The Magic of Bulgarian Bagpipe”. He has also participated in the recording of a number of albums (CDs) of various artists, including of Theodosii Spassov Folk Quintet, Sinan Çelik, Darina Slavcheva Slavova, the Lira Orchestra, Todor Kozhuharov, DJ Balkanski, music for Bulgare National Folklore Ensemble, etc.

For his creative activity, the candidate has won numerous awards at various Bulgarian and international competitions.

Conclusion

The overview of I. Georgiev's scientific-research, teaching-methodical and artistic-creative activities indisputably presents him as a suitable candidate in the announced competition. He demonstrates a high qualification and successfully realizes himself in each of the indicated spheres – both as an educator in an academic environment and as a prominent performer in his concert activity. All this gives me reason to confidently support the election of I. Georgiev for the academic position of “Associate Professor” at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts” under Professional field “Music and Dance Arts”, specialty “Bagpipe and its Teaching Methodology”.

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