Statement of Opinion
by Prof. Galina Georgieva Lardeva, PhD regarding the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 8.2, Fine Arts, Stage Technique and Technology and Scenography major, Department of Applied Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts, AMDFA Prof. Dr. Asen Diamandiev – Plovdiv, with candidate Petko Alexandrov Tanchev, PhD

1. General overview of the procedure and the materials received for review

Petko Alexandrov Tanchev, PhD, is the sole candidate participating in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 8.2, Fine Arts (Stage Technique and Technology and Scenography), at the Department of Applied Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts. The competition was announced in the State Gazette on 26.03.2026, and a scientific jury for the procedure was appointed by Rector's Order No. RD-27-131 of 26 May 2026. The candidate submitted all required documents within the legally established deadline. The candidacy and the specific presentation of the achievements of Petko Tanchev, PhD, are structured according to the sections of the scientometric table corresponding to the professional field. In quantitative terms, these achievements are fully sufficient to meet the requirements for the position in question.

Two solo exhibition projects are presented, 2019: Synergy of the Future (Exhibition Hall 2019, Plovdiv) and the original audiovisual project Imagined Urban Finds (Bishop's Basilica, Plovdiv), as well as two scenography projects: the candidate's work on the production of Mozart's The Magic Flute (Plovdiv State Opera, 2025-2026 season) and the production of Sergei Prokofiev's Cinderella (ballet production at Ruse State Opera, 2025-2026 season).

The monograph published on the basis of his defended doctoral dissertation, titled Visual Programming: Creative Tools in TouchDesigner (Plovdiv, Janet-45, 2026) is also submitted among the documents.

Among the leading creative works that do not form the habilitation thesis, the documents include one video-mapping installation, Clock (as part of the International Festival Light and Shadow in Yifeng, 30.12.2024), and the scenography for the opera production Rusalka by Antonín Dvořák (Varna State Opera, 2025-2026).

Two supporting creative participations are also submitted as materials for the competition. In his role as video designer, Tanchev, PhD, created the visual identity for the theatrical productions The Great Gatsby (after Fitzgerald, Youth Theatre, Sofia, 2025-2026) and Moby Dick (after Melville, Ivan Vazov National Theatre, 2024-2025).

The scientometric table also records the requisite points from citations, reviews, other publications and awards, which round out and reinforce the candidate's profile.

2. Short Biography for the Candidate

Petko Alexandrov Tanchev, PhD, graduated in Scenography (master's program) from the National Academy of Art in 2010. He defended his dissertation, Visual Programming Tools (2023), at NAA. His creative debut as scenographer and video designer came in 2009 with the production Four Rooms at Sofia Theater, a production honored with two Ikar awards, precisely in the categories of scenography and technical execution. From then to the present, the candidate has been among the most distinguished Bulgarian scenographers. In recent years, his work has increasingly focused on

the visual expressions of numerous opera and musical productions, as well as a number of mapping installations both in Bulgaria and abroad. He works as a scenographer at Plovdiv State Opera and as a tutor at AMDFA Prof. Asen Diamandiev, but also takes part in various projects outside these institutions, creating the stage imagery for productions at, for instance, Ruse State Opera, Varna State Opera, and Plovdiv Theater. For his work on the stage imagery of Madama Butterfly, he was honored with the Plovdiv Award.

3. Relevance of the subject matter

The impact of contemporary digital technology on artistic imagery, and its place in the consciousness of the contemporary individual, is undoubtedly a relevant and significant subject, one that admits of many different approaches and problem-focused perspectives. First of all on a purely technological level (as the practical application, direction and further development of various software products), in a historical and theoretical perspective, as immediate stage-based visual practice, as an image-based component within the system of the total work of art that an opera or theatrical production typically represents, and so on. Bringing these various perspectives together on the problem, as well as questions of how they are taught academically, is itself a significant and topical issue.

4. Suitability of the research methods for achieving the stated goals

It is precisely this last perspective, aimed at sharing technological and artistic experience, that forms the methodological premise underlying Petko Tanchev's activity as a whole. Admittedly, this methodological lens is not stated or mapped out explicitly, but it can be inferred through the correlations between his individual artistic achievements and their contexts. At the same time, however laconic the author is in presenting his own work directly, when combined with the personal experience set out in the monograph, the visual expressions take on a rather different meaning, because it is precisely there that “goals”, “means”, “tools” and “impact” are brought together. It strikes me that this kind of methodological minimalism is well suited to the purpose of the visual complexity under consideration.

5. Assessment of the materials submitted

The visual identities created by Tanchev, PhD, has for various productions, together with his visual interventions in public space, are unquestionably distinctive and striking. The candidate's stage imagery is unified by a modernist economy of signs, together with the constant presence of the trace that digital technology leaves as an expression of itself. At the same time, the character of these visions varies according to their function within each production. While the geometricized spatial niches in The Great Gatsby carry the feel of the era of New Objectivity, in The Magic Flute they stand in contrast to a digitally generated vortex that explodes order and any sense of stability. The contrast works differently, however, in a romantic, colored and rhythmically anchored melancholy, in the Moby Dick theatrical production.

A different type of visual solution is offered, for instance, in the production of Rusalka, where the scenographic mapping created by Petko Tanchev offers rich possibilities for whimsical interweavings between the natural and the human environment. Especially in the case of the opera being staged at the Summer Theatre in Varna, one can clearly see how the stage image is conceived

not as auxiliary or illustrative surroundings, but as intensive transformative work on the specific space. In general, the images that “redress” the space are not elements external to the wholeness of the production but interpretative mechanisms. A striking example of this is the emphasis on the theme of passing time in Cinderella (Ruse State Opera). Here, the candidate's portfolio serves us well in seeing how the Roman numerals “leave” the clock face and are projected onto the human figures.

The theme of the clock and of time carries over into the mapping installation of the same subject (in the Chinese city of Yifeng), where we can clearly see the standalone capacity of these spatial redressings and their power of impact, as well as the necessary emphasis placed on engaging with local cultural tradition.

The monograph submitted also merits attention and a positive assessment. The study Visual Design makes a successful attempt at creating a practically oriented introduction to the use of software technologies through which multimedia systems and works of digital art are built. Alongside this, it sketches, if only in passing, a historical outlook that begins with the wave of interest in cybernetics from the early 1950s and reaches through to the development of TouchDesigner and its gradual opening toward other platforms and media systems, while also tracing, again only briefly, the artistic pursuits of artists of the caliber of Nam June Paik and Patrick Lechner.

6. Contributions and significance of the research and the publications on the topic of the thesis

– A substantial and leading contribution in Petko Tanchev's work lies in mapping out the points of intersection between digital technology, spatial presence and visual perception. These points of intersection are drawn together into a general, all-encompassing system, linking concrete artistic achievements to theoretical and technological foundations and making those achievements, in principle, transferable and shareable. At the same time, these characteristic pursuits prove to be, in principle, compatible with and complementary to traditional scenographic construction and set design.

– On a more specific level, a distinct achievement of Petko Tanchev, PhD, is the sustained introduction of digital visual solutions and video mapping into the artistic practice of opera and theater. This achievement is especially notable given the inherently conservative attitudes surrounding how opera productions are treated and received. This visual expression not infrequently becomes the element of a production that audiences remember longest.

– A further contribution, one that outlines Petko Tanchev's distinctive creative profile, lies in his visual interventions in public space. Works such as Clock stand out for their meticulous development, for the power of the imagination invested in them, for the intensity of their impact, and for their overall conceptual coherence. Also significant here is the way these works echo the pursuits found in the stage productions, thereby shaping in viewers' minds a broader idea of the candidate's visual plasticity.

– The monograph Visual Design also makes its own contribution, as a practically oriented, useful handbook that builds further on the candidate's achievements from his doctoral dissertation.

– The direct linking of scenographic work with the process of teaching is another significant contribution in Petko Tanchev's activity. It is rare for an artist so directly engaged in artistic practice to also take on direct commitments in teaching young scenographers. This two-way commitment is without doubt successful and productive for everyone involved in this creative exchange.

7. Critical remarks and recommendations

While the brevity of each description of the submitted documents is methodologically motivated, the information presented on the wholeness of the projects is nonetheless insufficient, given that a production one has missed can never, in principle, be recovered. It would also be worthwhile for the corresponding descriptions to include the names and roles of the other participants in the productions and projects, along with, where possible, some indication of the collaborative work among the various specialists and performers involved.

8. Conclusion

On the basis of the significant achievements in the creative and research activity Petko Alexandrov Tanchev, PhD, I propose that the esteemed scientific jury award him the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 8.2, Fine Arts (Stage Technique and Technology and Scenography), and I confidently vote In Favor.

26.07. 2026 Prof. Galina Lardeva, PhD