

## **PEER REVIEW**

**for the artistic and educational activities  
of Chief Assistant Dr. Stefan Yordanov Yordanov,  
in connection with participation in a competition for occupation of the academic position  
“Associate Professor”  
under Professional field 8.3. “Music and Dance”,  
Specialty “Bulgarian Folk Dances Processing”,  
announced in State Gazette, Issue 12 of 11.02.2020  
for the needs of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – City of  
Plovdiv**

**Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Daniela Kirilova Dzheneva, Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts**

This Peer Review is prepared on the basis of documents submitted under a competition announced by Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – City of Plovdiv /State Gazette, Issue 12 of 11.02.2020/ and on the website of the Academy for the needs of the Choreography Department at the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography. The documents submitted under the competition comply with the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Rules for its implementation and the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquisition of scientific degrees and occupation of academic positions at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts.

One candidate applied and participated with documents in the announced competition for “Associate Professor”, namely Chief Assistant Dr. Stefan Yordanov Yordanov. The materials he has presented are exhaustive and comply with the terms and conditions for occupation of an academic position announced by the Academy and meet the minimum national requirements under Art.26, para.2 and para.3 of the from Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Stefan Yordanov was born in 1984 in the City of Veliko Tarnovo. He started dancing at the age of 5 in Tarnovche Children’s Dance Troupe. Before graduating from high school he was accepted as a professional dancer in Iskra Professional Folklore Ensemble – Veliko Tarnovo. Stefan Yordanov left the Ensemble and his hometown because of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, where he was accepted in the specialty “Bulgarian Folk Choreography”. From then on, his professional development is mainly related to the Academy and is entirely subordinated to choreography. In 2007, he graduated as a Choreographer-Pedagogue with a Bachelor Degree and in 2008 defended his Master Degree as a Choreographer-Director. In 2005, he was accepted as a ballet dancer in the Staff Dance Ensemble of the Academy. For the shown good organizational and creative qualities since the beginning of 2008, he was chosen as a Choreographer of the Academic Folklore Ensemble at the Academy. For 10 years, Stefan Yordanov has been teaching the disciplines “Processing of Bulgarian Folk Dances” and “Samples of Bulgarian Folk

Choreography” in the Choreography Department. He also teaches classes in “Bulgarian Folk Dances” within the discipline “Physical Education and Sport” in the Optional disciplines module for all specialties of the Academy.

Stefan Yordanov has an extremely rich artistic and creative activity. In addition to the full-time engagements in the Academy, he is also a Choreographer of: Geo Milev Bulgarian Folk Dance Ensemble – Plovdiv, the Children’s Dance Troupe at Hristo Botev Primary School – village of Razhevo Konare, Bratsigovche Children’s Dance Troupe at Vasil Petleshkov Community Center – Bratsigovo, the Children’s Dance Troupe at Vasil Petleshkov Home for Children Deprived of Parental Care – Bratsigovo, Children’s Dance Troupe Gerene at Prosveta Community Center – Belozem, Children’s Dance Troupe at Nikola Indzhov Kindergarten – village of Razhevo Konare, FOLK VISION Professional Dance Ensemble – village of Razhevo Konare, GERENE Dance Group – village of Belozem, FOLK VISION Professional Dance Ensemble – Plovdiv.

The experience of a choreographer and teacher gained over the years gave him grounds to successfully defend a dissertation on the topic: “Processing of Bulgarian Folk Dances as a Basis for Their Stage Performance” and to obtain an educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in 2016.

True to his active work as a Choreographer-Director and Director of folklore performances, Stefan Yordanov presents as the main habilitation work in this competition three newly created author’s performances. All three performances are contrastingly different in content, means of expression, and messages. For each of them, the candidate presented an annotation, a libretto, a dramatic construction, a program, as well as an imperial material, to which he made a reference.

1. Concert-performance “Ten Years of Academic Folklore Ensemble at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts”. Choreography and direction – Stefan Yordanov. The concert was performed on 01.08.2018 as part of the “XXIV International Folklore Festival Plovdiv”. In front of the thousands of people in the Ancient Theater of Plovdiv, an extremely diverse program, including 18 original works based on folklore, 8 of which dances, was presented. The newly created ones were: “Games in Shopluka” and “Dobrudzha Suite”. The rest of the dances were mostly processed and presented in a new, different way from the original idea of the author in order to dynamically build the concert as a festive spectacle. For this purpose, many of the former student dancers of the full-time Dance Ensemble, at that moment leaders of a number of established dance ensembles in the country, were involved as performers. This gave him the freedom to increase the number of performers and to change the composition of some of the dances compared to the original idea. The introduction of the performance “Men’s Dance with Drums” was solved in two plans with a double composition of 16 young people who danced in an ensemble and attractive way and beat the drums in rhythm, without musical accompaniment. The subsequent Pirin music and dance performance “Kate, Kate” was decided on three plans with the participation of 36 performers. Stefan Yordanov showed an extremely attractive approach to the only dance in the program, which was choreographed by another author – “Shopski Dance” by Kiril Dzhenev, used as the culmination of the

program. In his stage decision in this case, 40 dancers were used – 20 men and one woman, which put the audience on their feet. The wonderful atmosphere of the Amphitheater was maximally used by the choreographer, as he did not concentrate only on the stage space, but also mastered the “Proskenia”, which rose above the stage. With the staging of this jubilee performance Stefan Yordanov celebrated with dignity the 10-year period in which he worked as a Choreographer of the Academic Folklore Ensemble and raised to a new higher level the requirements for performers, the diversity of the repertoire, and last but not least, the opinion of the audience for the ensembles of the Academy.

2. “Budna Perushtitsa” is a theatrical, musical, and dance performance, realized for the first time on 09.05.2019 in front of the Historical Museum of Perushtitsa. The choreography was by Stefan Yordanov with participation of the performers from the Staff Dance Ensemble at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts and actors from the Plovdiv Drama Theater. The performance was multi-genre and was built in 11 images, combining different types of performing arts: speech, music, dance, and multimedia. Here the choreographer mastered the active forms of dance. Each of them was thematic and carried a certain message, and all of them together were united by the tragic narrative in the drama. In the individual scenes they were: “Dance of Awareness”, “Dance of Fertility”, “Dance of the Book”, “Preparation for the Uprising”, “Invasion of the Turks”, “The Battle”, “Dance of Salvation” /or maybe a dance to those seeking salvation beyond life/. The Choreographer described the used authentic material from the Pirin ethnographic region, the Rhodopes, Shopluka, and authentic Turkish dances. “Budna Perushtitsa” is a spectacle – a reconstruction of specific historical events. It includes glorious moments from our past that can be recreated in a completely different artistic way, but the message will always be deeply emotional, evoking contrasting feelings. This is not the first time that Stefan Yordanov has interpreted the theme of the April Uprising, but in this case his masterful approach to the stage transformation of folk dance, subordinated to a certain idea, should be emphasized. In addition to the syncretism achieved in the construction of the artistic image, the drama of the dance was enriched with modern plastic solutions, characteristic gestures and acting tasks for the dancers.
3. Concert-performance “Rhodope Wedding” is the third offered to our attention author’s performance under the choreography of Stefan Yordanov, presented for the first time in Nedelino on 07.09.2019. It is created entirely with respect to processing of authentic folk dances and melodies from the Middle Rhodopes. Here the approach of the choreographer was radically different from the previous realizations. “Rhodope Wedding” is a show made up of 16 music and dance images that recreate life and ritual moments from the birth of love between young people to the wedding itself. The authentic folk dances used in the compositional solutions were: “Ripnato”, “Chukano”, “Enino”, “Momchilovsko”, “Tropano”, “Pokachila se Tudora”, “Dospatsko”, and “Svornoto”. I list them to emphasize the author’s desire to adhere as much as possible to the original, to the authentic

characteristics and stylistic features of the folklore material. Moreover, he purposefully preserved the shape of the round dance, the grip of men and women, connecting them with a towel and a number of ritual actions that emphasize the original nature of the plot – designed and built around the Rhodope wedding. The processing of the authentic material was quite dosed and symbolic in order to preserve the style and character of the Rhodope folklore.

With the three performances offered for review, Stefan Yordanov convinces us that he masters the various forms of stage dances and has achieved his own original style of presenting this enormous wealth. With each work, he once again convinces us that the most exciting topics always come from the history and way of life of our people. His dances in the theatrical production “Boryana” by Yordan Yovkov, realized by the Plovdiv Drama Theater, are also very original and unanimously woven into the dramaturgy. Taking into account the repertoire tasks before the Staff Dance Ensemble of the Academy, Stefan Yordanov manages in the best way to organize the rehearsal process so as not to violate the curriculum, but on the contrary, to support the practical work of students on their semester and diploma assignments. He also intensively participates in all projects of the specialty “Bulgarian Folk Choreography” – concerts, conferences, and field research. I welcome his idea to study and analyze the work of choreographers from his hometown. In this regard, he presented two published materials: “Nikola Kolev and his Contribution to the Development of Bulgarian Folk Dances” and “The Place of the Choreographer Ivan Ivanov in the Stage Transformation of Bulgarian Folk Dance”. Regarding the articles, I would recommend that he write only about the objects he studies, without giving publicity to untruths someone has said about other artists, because what is written remains, and thus, reality changes.

Stefan Yordanov has diverse contributions to the wide range of choreography – creative, educational, and scientific. Every year he enriches the repertoire of the Academic Folklore Ensemble with new dance works, thus developing his abilities and outlook of a lecturer in “Processing of Bulgarian Folk Dances”. As the head of the Staff Dance Ensemble he contributes to the sustainable popularization of the Academy and the specialty “Bulgarian Folk Choreography”, realizes joint projects and productions with the cultural institutes of Plovdiv, and gives concerts in a number of municipalities in Bulgaria. Stefan Yordanov is often a member of juries at national festivals and competitions and of the Regional Round of the Ministry of Education and Science for admission to national dance competitions.

In conclusion, I will emphasize that the achieved irrefutable and significant contributions of high artistic value by Chief Assistant Dr. Stefan Yordanov, together with the attached scientific reports and participation in creative projects, give me reason to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award him the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the specialty “Processing of Bulgarian Folk Dances” under Professional field 8.3 “Music and Dance”.

07.07.2020

Reviewer:.....

/Prof. Dr. D. Dzheneva/