

## PEER REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Todor Aleksandrov Kirov

for the creative and artistic activity of  
Chief Assistant Dr. Stefan Yordanov Yordanov

candidate for participation in a competition  
for **occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor”**  
under the scientific specialty “Bulgarian Folk Dances Processing”  
under field 8.3 “Music and Dance Arts”

at the Department of Choreography, Faculty of Music Folklore and Choreography, at Prof.  
Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv

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*“The historical, political, and socio-economic conditions in different eras have had an impact on the formation of the dance culture of each nation... We are really happy heirs to a huge in volume and exceptional variety of forms of folk dance wealth. This obliges the contemporary figures of the folk dance to be bearers of the originality of our national folklore... it obliges them to study it comprehensively and thoroughly...”*

The preservation of the traditional Bulgarian dance folklore is an essential necessity from the point of view of preserving our national Bulgarian identity. Arising from this are the researches that are made in order to study it and pass it on to the next generations. At the same time, when we talk about folk art, a very voluminous and complex problem always comes to the fore – the relationship between folklore and modernity.

For folklore art (as art that preserves and maintains living traditions in folk life) the connection with the modern interests of the people is historically predetermined. It is embedded in the nature of folklore. In other words, the following maxim applies here: “Folk art must meet its time; otherwise it will cease to be folk.” In its life, contemporary art is regulated by certain laws. On the one hand, it willingly or unwillingly strives to be modern, and at the same time it is striving for the future. Simultaneously, by entering the future, this art appears as antecedent. In this way a straight feedback connection between past, present, and future is realized. This connection is permanent and inherently unique. Representing a continuous dynamic process and responding to the “modern interests of the people”, it also has relevant specific features, such as: “quantitative and qualitative transformation of phenomena”.

Reduced to our case, this means that “... as in all arts, in dance we observe complex and uneven stages of development, which are clearly ascending. Each of these stages is not only a preparation and transition to a higher stage, but also remains in itself with its independence and uniqueness. In our time, dance has reached a chapter of its stage and professional transformation. The stage life of the Bulgarian folk dance exists thanks to its great power and impact on the audience, as well as the boundless love of the Bulgarians for it ...”

I quote an excerpt from the dissertation of Stefan Yordanov on “Processing of Bulgarian Folk Dances as a Basis for Their Stage Transformation”. The aim of the dissertation is “to prove the importance of Bulgarian folk dances as a basis in contemporary dance performances and to present the manner and extent of their processing in the process of combining with other styles of dance and other arts”.

Today, as proof of the growth and transformation of folk dances into spectacular thematic performances, Dr. Yordanov presents five concerts – performances in which he is a choreographer and director. They are the artistic and creative part of his habilitation work.

Chief Assistant Dr. Stefan Yordanov Yordanov participates in the competition for Associate Professor with significant (10 years) pedagogical experience in this scientific specialty, supported by 12 years of leadership, organizational and creative work as a Head of the Staff Dance Ensemble and a Choreographer of the Academic Folklore Ensemble at the Academy.

The beginning of Stefan Yordanov's creative path dates back to 2001 as a dancer in the Iskra Professional Folklore Ensemble in Veliko Tarnovo. From 2004 to 2007, he was a student at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – specialty "Bulgarian Folk Choreography", and in 2008 he completed a Master's degree in the same specialty. At the same time, from 2005 to 2008, he was a ballet dancer in the Staff Dance Ensemble at the Academy. From 01.02.2008 to the present, he is the leader of the same dance ensemble and choreographer of the Academic Folklore Ensemble. He defended his educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" on 21.07.2016.

The creative activity of Stefan Yordanov is extensive – he has gone through all kinds of stage forms of Bulgarian folk dance, creating a large number (over 30) of works. As a choreographer of the Academic Folklore Ensemble he has made seven original productions, with which the Ensemble performs concerts and participates in festivals, reviews, and competitions in the country and abroad. As the Head of the Staff Dance Ensemble he has performed four productions together with the ballet of the Plovdiv Opera, namely: "On the River", "Nestinarka", "Knyaz Igor", and "Swan Dance". He is also a choreographer of three theatrical and dance productions: "To You Sacred Bulgaria", "Boryana" and "Reconstruction of the April Uprising in Perushtitsa". He was a consultant in the film production "Voevoda". In his biography, Yordanov has 4 awards from state institutions, festivals, and competitions.

Apart from his work as a lecturer and leader of the representative artistic ensembles at the Academy, Stefan is also the main artistic director of the Geo Milev Bulgarian Folk Dance Ensemble – Plovdiv (from 2010 until now). He also leads other dance ensembles (mostly youth and children's) and folk clubs – a total of eight in number. His ability to work is impressive and his attraction to the practical realization of his pedagogical skills as a leader and choreographer is evident.

Stefan Yordanov is an enterprising man, with extensive organizational experience and authority among his subordinates and colleagues. He is a specialist in the field of Bulgarian folk choreography. From 2010 to the present, he teaches students the specialty "Bulgarian Folk Dances Processing". This is the specialty in which he applied for the academic position of "Associate Professor".

As a habilitation thesis, Chief Assistant Dr. Stefan Yordanov presents a set of creative and scientific activities. The work consists of five concerts, of which he is a choreographer and director, two scientific publications, two workshops, one master class, the required number of citations, four reviews, awards he received as a choreographer, projects, in which he has participated, and many other events. All these components are criteria that the author has fully met the requirements of the Regulations for the implementation of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. There is a visually filled scientometric table with marked number of points on the individual indicators from the table under Higher education field 8 "Arts", Professional field 8.3 "Music and Dance Arts". With a required 500 points, the candidate has achieved 595.

Through the artistic and creative and scientific results in the present scientific research it is proved that the authentic Bulgarian folk dances are an inexhaustible source for the creation of new dance compositions. They are the basis of the stage transformation of

Bulgarian dance folklore in contemporary dance productions and performances, which leads to the conclusion that the preservation, development, and promotion of Bulgarian folk dances should be the main task of today's and future generations of choreographers.

In order to strengthen the specialties and provide an opportunity for academic growth of the lecturers at the Department of Choreography, the competition for "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty "Bulgarian Folk Dances Processing" was announced. Chief Assistant Dr. Stefan Yordanov Yordanov participates in it with artistic and creative and scientific production. As a lecturer with many years of pedagogical experience, as a specialist, "bearing and knowing in detail the uniqueness of our national folklore", and last but not least as a choreographer and composer with a clear vision of the processing of folk dances and the creation of voluminous thematic dance productions, Yordanov is a serious contender in this competition.

**My assessment is positive and high. I am convinced that Chief Assistant Dr. Stefan Yordanov Yordanov is worthy of the academic position "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" in the scientific specialty "Bulgarian Folk Dances Processing", UNDER field 8.3 "Music and Dance Arts", at the Department of Choreography, Faculty of Music Folklore and Choreography, at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv.**

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*Prof. Dr. Todor Kirov*