

## **PEER REVIEW**

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regarding the candidacy of Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Milchev Vasilev for competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” under 8.3 “Music and Dance Arts”, specialty “Shepherd’s Pipe and Chamber Instrumental Ensembles”

Announced by Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv

### **About the candidate, his professional development and documentation**

The only candidate in the competition is Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Milchev Vasilev. In the autobiographical reference, it is stated that his current position is Chief Assistant in the Musical Folklore Department at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv (since 2017), where he graduated and obtained the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (2015) and in which he has been teaching since 2002. According to the submitted documents (all necessary and required documents and materials according to the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its application), Dr. Vasilev meets the general conditions for participation in the competition procedure under the order of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The reference on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Art.26 of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for the academic position “Associate Professor” (Scientific field 8 “Arts”, Professional field 8.3 “Music and Dance Arts”) shows, as follows: 50 points (group of indicators A), 100 points (group of indicators C), 145 points (group of indicators D), 50 points (group of indicators E) and 70 points (group of indicators F) or a total of 415 points, which are sufficient for the purposes of the competition. According to the submitted reference for scientometric indicators, the candidate meets the national minimum requirements for the academic position “Associate Professor”.

In this competition Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Vasilev applies with the following production: Indicators C: 1 monograph (habilitation thesis); Indicators D: 1 monograph published on the basis of the dissertation work (citations entered as contributing points); 1 article published in a specialized publication in the field of arts; 3 creative performances – concerts (1 with a leading and 2 with a support function of the candidate); Indicators E: 5 citations to a monograph and 2 articles; Indicators F: 1 published teaching aid, 3 master class guides and art workshop. Among the evidence, in addition to the indicated author’s texts, are attached citations, certificates of participation in projects and master classes, as well as audio-visual production.

## **I. Scientific and research activity**

The presented scientific production in the competition for “Associate Professor” meets the requirements of the competition as a profile of the developed issues and quantity.

Vasil Vasilev has submitted for participation in the competition the monograph “The Shepherd’s Pipe in Bulgarian Musical Practice” (Plovdiv: Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, 2021), with a volume of 140 pages, which is the main work proposed for participation in the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” (habilitation thesis). It consists of four sections (“The Shepherd’s Pipe and the Development of Bulgarian Folk and Instrumental Music”; “Shepherd’s Pipe Players of the 20th Century and Their Role in the Development of the Shepherd’s Pipe Instrumental Folk Music”; “Usage of the Shepherd’s Pipe in Folk Music Chamber Groups” and “Usage of the Shepherd’s Pipe in Modern Folk Music Orchestra”), and includes historical data on the shepherd’s pipe in Bulgarian folk music, many analyzes illustrated with 42 sheet music examples, as well as a list of sources used. The candidate defines his work as the fruit of “long-term work, experience, skill and knowledge accumulated in my professional pedagogical and creative activity”. Vasil Vasilev’s contributions are in this unique for him combination of ancestral (“in his gene and blood”) tradition and conscious choice; of musicianship skills and teaching practices; of an inside look (into music and tradition) and a distanced reading from the outside (the knowledge of it, its functioning in new and different cultural contexts). That is why this book is valuable – it fills a gap in the knowledge of the shepherd’s pipe in tradition and in modern Bulgarian musical practice, and offers both a deep and broad view of the processes of the last few decades related to the shepherd’s pipe art and with the dynamics of the musical tradition in modern Bulgarian culture. The monograph “The Shepherd’s Pipe in Bulgarian Musical Practice” is a useful study for those interested in this traditional instrument, its instrumental-performance styles and repertoires: pupils and students, teachers and researchers, amateurs and professionals.

The candidate proposes a book published on the basis of the dissertation work: “Characteristic Features of the Contemporary Shepherd’s Pipe Performance Art” (Plovdiv, Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, 2019) – it will not be discussed here.

The attached article follows the interest of the author stated in published monographs, dissertations, etc. “Usage of Shepherd’s Pipe and Bagpipes in Chamber-Instrumental and Vocal Folklore Ensembles”, published in the Yearbook of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts (2019), has contributions in the following directions: it analyzes in detail the role of shepherd’s pipe and bagpipes in chamber-instrumental compositions; outlines their specifics as sound extraction, use of the different registers, use of the different types of ornaments, dynamics, etc.; offers approaches to the establishment of a chamber ensemble with quality professional sound in performance; analyzes the role of the shepherd’s pipe and the bagpipe in vocal accompaniment and accompanying function; charts ways to achieve the best ensemble sound, vocals and intonation purity of the chamber ensemble accompanying the

vocal performance. With a similar theme, the candidate participated in the 2020 Spring Scientific Readings National Scientific Conference.

It can be summarized that the presented materials as a scientific research activity show the sustained and deep interest of Chief Assistant Dr. Vasilev to the study of the shepherd's pipe, shepherd's pipe music, its masters and uses in modern practices and formations. The qualities of the candidate's publications are highly rated, evidenced by 2 published reviews and 4 citations. One of the most important contributions of the candidate is the synthesis of knowledge and skills, of scientific research, teaching-methodical, pedagogical and artistic work with proven results, which will be commented on in the following parts of the peer review.

## **II. Educational (pedagogical and teaching-methodical) activity**

The scientific, musical-theoretical and folkloristic developments of Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Vasilev find diverse and visible applications in practice. The already mentioned book "Non-Measured Melodies from the Repertoire of Popular Master Players", a teaching aid co-authored by Prof. Lyuben Dosev and Vasil Vasilev (Plovdiv: Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, 2017), for example, combines scientific knowledge with practical skills, provides information on old shepherd's pipe styles, offers, together with musical transcriptions, a methodology for mastering different performance styles in shepherd's pipe training; there are also teaching-methodical resources to help lecturers and trainees in mastering the traditional shepherd's pipe art.

I know about the various disciplines that Dr. Vasil Vasilev teaches at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts ("Shepherd's Pipe", "Chamber Music", "Pedagogical Practice"). The materials for the competition contain a reference for covering the required hours of study load. It is known that in addition to the teaching activity at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, the candidate also teaches shepherd's pipe at Lyuben Karavelov Secondary School – Plovdiv, where he trains young shepherd's pipe players. The manifestations and qualities of his educational (pedagogical and educational-methodical) activity are visible in a number of materials submitted for the competition: diploma as a teacher and leader of pupils of Lyuben Karavelov Secondary School – Plovdiv in the First National Folklore Competition in Kazanlak (2017); positive reviews in Art Spectrum, a publication of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv, for the lecturing work of Vasil Vasilev at the 15th edition of the International Folklore Seminar in the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv, training lovers of Bulgarian folklore from different countries (2019), etc.

The syntheses of the candidate's artistic activities as a musician and educational and pedagogical activities as a teacher and lecturer are presented in the competition documentation as a master class and two workshops. The master class on shepherd's pipe of Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Vasilev is at Lyuben Karavelov Secondary School, Plovdiv (12.05.2021), on the topic: "Mastering the Different Registers and Strokes of the Shepherd's Pipe and Shepherd's Pipe Melodies from the Thracian Folklore Region". The candidate was the leader of a workshop on the topic "Working with Chamber Folklore Ensembles" at

Shiroka Laka National School of Folk Arts, with the participation of students, majoring in “Performing Arts – Folklore”, as well as bachelors and masters from Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv (21.05.2021). Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Vasilev also realizes educational and methodological activities outside of Bulgaria: he was the head of a shepherd’s pipe workshop in the City of Katerini – Greece, organized by the Music School, where he introduces young Greek musicians and students to the traditional Bulgarian folk instrument shepherd’s pipe – theoretically and practically, by presenting the history of the shepherd’s pipe, the structure of the instrument, the range, registers and other specific features of this instrument and its music (30.08.2018 and 31.08.2018).

The materials proposed in connection with the competition show that the artistic and scientific qualities of the candidate have been successfully integrated into the academic training of students and other trainees in the practice of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv, in the system of secondary education and amateur creativity – the evidence for the latter is also related to the artistic performances of the candidate, which I will cover in the next part of the peer review.

### **III. Artistic and creative activity in the field of arts**

The educational and methodological activities of Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Vasilev are intertwined with scientific and applied activities and artistic work as a musician and concertmaster. An example of such a synthesis is the activity of the candidate as the head of the project “Studio Audio Recordings of Outstanding Students 2021-2022”, Plovdiv: Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts.

As stated in the first part of the peer review, Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Vasilev presents in the competition documents three creative performances – concerts (one with a leading role and two in which he has a supporting role). Together with his academic colleagues from the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, the candidate has also participated in several projects related to the presentation of Bulgarian folklore and modern ethnic music in the media and to an audience not only in Bulgaria. Of this type of artistic events is a concert by the Folk Line Formation in the City of Osijek, Croatia, in the concert hall of the Academy of Art and Culture at the Josip Strossmayer University – Osijek (29.01.2019), with the participation of Vasil Vasilev, shepherd’s pipe. Vasil Vasilev had a leading role and a solo performance in a concert on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of the birth of Nikola Vaptsarov (Sofia, National Palace of Culture, Hall 7, 07.12.2019). Among the artistic manifestations of the candidate is his participation as a soloist-shepherd’s pipe player of the Academic Folklore Ensemble in the concert “Ten Years of Academic Folklore Ensemble at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv” (Ancient Theater, Plovdiv, 01.08.2018). The documents for the competition contain posters and flyers of the artistic events. In addition to Indicators D13, D14 and D28 (concerts, a master class and two workshops), audiovisual materials prepared by the candidate are also presented. I watched the recordings of the performances provided as DVDs, as some of them I also know from their inclusion in programs of national media (the anniversary concert “Ten Years of Academic

Folklore Ensemble at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv” was broadcast by the Bulgarian National Television in 2018). They are only a small part of the many known proofs of the candidate’s magnificent qualities as an instrumentalist-soloist and participant in chamber and ensemble formations for traditional and ethnic music.

#### **IV. Personal impressions of the candidate**

I know other artistic performances of the shepherd’s pipe player Vasil Vasilev. More than once I have presented music in which he left his talent and accumulated skills to make it sound like a modern folk treasure trove – both in my original shows on national radio and in lectures to students. I closely follow the development of Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Vasilev as a researcher and lecturer – I participated in the scientific jury for his procedure for occupation of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”. I had the opportunity to read his last monograph in manuscript and to hold in my hands one of the first printed copies. I am convinced that we need such artists, lecturers and researchers of traditional Bulgarian music and instruments: possessing professionalism and creative originality, dedicated to scientific research and pedagogical work, devoted to Bulgarian folklore, patriotic, hardworking, capable and creative. Behind their humble gestures, masters like Vasil Vasilev hide wealth and talent, which were received as a gift, but which were also polished for a long time, with a lot of work, and with the luck of being born into a musical family. The mission to play the shepherd’s pipe Vasil Vasilev inherited fatefully as a family tradition and duty to carry on the legacy of generations of distinguished masters before him. It is not by chance that he turns to the shepherd’s pipe and its key role in the instrumental tradition in Bulgarian folklore. Vasil Vasilev’s contributions are in this unique for him combination of ancestral (“in his gene and blood”) tradition and conscious choice; of musicianship skills and teaching practices; of an inside look (into music and tradition) and a distanced reading from the outside (the knowledge of it, its functioning in new and different cultural contexts). He knows the instrument “inside out”, being one of the prominent contemporary shepherd’s pipe players with proven skills in re-creating various technical-performance approaches, styles and repertoires. For years he has been involved in the re-creation of this tradition as a soloist musician and shepherd’s pipe player with highly acclaimed concert and studio appearances. We need such work and look at the inherited tradition: both from within and from above. Only masters standing on the shoulders of gifted predecessors and aware of the covenants of tradition can be there.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The candidate’s activity and his scientific and applied achievements and contributions, presented in the competition documentation, show that Chief Assistant Dr. Vasil Vasilev is a proven researcher, has an academic practice with established pedagogical experience, and possesses artistic qualities that have received high praise as artistic performances. His candidacy meets the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation. This gives me reasons to give a high and positive evaluation to Dr. Vasilev as a candidate in the competition and to propose to the scientific jury his selection for the academic position “Associate Professor” in

8.3 “Music and Dance Arts” (“Shepherd’s Pipe and Chamber Instrumental Ensembles”) at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv.

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