

## PEER REVIEW

by

**Prof. Dr. Lyudmil Borisov Petkov**

in connection with a competition for occupation of the academic position of “**PROFESSOR,**” announced in State Gazette, Issue 44/19.05.2023, under Professional field **8.3. “Music and Dance Arts,”** “**Piano (Piano Accompaniment and Piano),**” for the needs of the Piano and Accordion Department at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv

### **1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate**

Associate Professor Dr. Zornitsa Dimitrova Petrova is the only candidate participating in the competition. The submitted documentation is in order and has all the accompanying details in accordance with the requirements of:

- > the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- > the Regulations for implementation of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- > the Regulations for the structure and activity of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts;

Zornitsa Petrova was born in the City of Plovdiv in 1965 in the family of established musicians. She graduated from the Secondary Music School in Plovdiv (now Dobrin Petkov National School of Music and Dance Art) with a gold medal, in the piano class of Prof. Georgi Petrov. In 1980, she was awarded a laureate title at the International Piano Competition in Senigallia (Italy). In the Prof. Pancho Vladigerov National Music Academy she studied in the piano class of Prof. Lili Atanasova and chamber music in the class of Prof. Vladimir Avramov. Assoc. Prof. Petrova also studied Applied Composition in a specialized course under the supervision of Simeon Pironkov. She was awarded a one-year scholarship named after Prof. Andrey Stoyanov. Z. Petrova is a Doctor of Musicology and Musical Art, and since 2013 – a full-time Associate Professor of Piano (Piano Accompaniment and Piano) at the Academy.

Assoc. Prof. Petrova is actively and successfully present in the cultural life of the country as a pianist, composer, singer, pedagogue, and reviewer. She currently heads the Piano and Accordion Department at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts.

With more than 30 years of experience, Z. Petrova has a clearly defined profile as an educator. Her students stand out for their sustainable development and active presence in the academic life. The author of a large number of scientific publications covering a wide range of topics, Z. Petrova entered the field of music criticism with a foreknowledge of this particular commitment of hers. The strict comprehensiveness of her approach, fueled by erudition, hard work, immediacy, and open-mindedness, makes it possible to get an objectively accurate idea of the reflected events in a plastic way, so that they take their rightful place, by enriching the musical-historical archive.

As the author and main driver in the practical implementation of several academic projects, the last of which was the First International Competition “Johann Sebastian Bach Soli Deo Gloria” (2022), Assoc. Prof. Petrova achieved significant results, with a clear imprint of a protected high cultural norm. In the creative performances of Z. Petrova, her affinity for

concert cycles stands out (“Old European Music,” “Viennese Classics,” “Unknown Bel Canto Pages,” “Masterpieces of Chamber Music of the 20th Century,” “The Songwriting of Franz Liszt”) and the integral “Sonatas for Violin and Piano by Johann Sebastian Bach,” in which the aspiration to conceptually understand a wide musical-aesthetic territory is easily recognized. Z. Petrova reveals her understanding of art in a complex and hyperpersonal way in the creative impulse towards all aspects of creative participation.

## **2. Brief presentation of the materials received for review according to the various indicators from the scientometric table**

### *Group of indicators A*

The candidate presents her dissertation work “*The Songwriting of Franz Liszt*” (2011) and a Diploma for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” /No 002, issued on 11.11.2011/.

### *Group of indicators C*

The following are presented as relevant in weight of a habilitation work:

1. Author’s concert of Z. Petrova – “Retrospection” (“Sans Résonance”)
2. Piano recital “The Big World of Mikrokosmos”
3. Piano recital “Fr. Chopin – Nocturnes”
4. Chamber concert with the tenor Jamie Damon (USA)
5. Opera Con Pianoforte – Christoph Willibald Gluck, “Orpheus” Opera (piano accompaniment and interpretation by Z. Petrova).

Of these creative performances, which significantly exceed the required number of points, according to the requirements of the Regulations for implementation of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, I would like to highlight in particular the author’s concert with works by Assoc. Prof. Petrova, which passed with great success and interest from the general public and the professional community, and in which the enviably high level of her compositional invention and technique is clearly evident.

In the second place (chronologically), I would like to note, as an outstanding achievement, the revelation of all the poetic brilliance and charm in the presentation of Chopin’s Nocturnes of higher instrumental and interpretive complexity.

The remaining three concerts, in their complexity, conceptual meaningfulness, multidirectional scope, and public resonance, fully and adequately protected by the weight of the effort to be mentally reached and artistically realized, to a large extent exceed the dry normative requirements.

### *Group of indicators D*

The wide range of repertoire of the leading and supporting creative performances is impressive, which together with the book “*The Songwriting of Franz Liszt*” and the article on “Anatoly Konstantinovich Lyadov and his Pianistic Work. Significance in the Traditions of Russian Piano Culture” present the content to the requirements in this section.

Deserved attention is paid to the work of a number of Bulgarian composers, presented in concerts in various cities in the country, including Sofia and Plovdiv.

Assoc. Prof. Petrova has marked only the publications sufficient as a requirement for the number of points for this section, which are actually significantly more in number – a good sign of selectivity and rejection of minor information overload.

In *Group of indicators E* the citations and reviews are correctly presented and meet the requirements laid down in the section.

#### *Group of indicators F*

Assoc. Prof. Petrova is the head of five artistic and creative projects and has participated in one more. The presented six reviews to them comprehensively and truthfully reflect the achievements of her activity. Completing the presentation of the candidate are: a master class in interpretation within the framework of the Summer Academy for Musical Theater (2021), guidance of the Atelier for Young Pianists (2023), and creative performance in a master class together with Romyana Kostova (soprano), village of Momchilovtsi, Norwegian House Hall (2021).

### **3. Contributions of leading creative performances**

Assoc. Prof. Petrova's leading creative performances illustrate a wide range of interests in the fields of activity, in which she declares her presence. In the four-sided unity of composer, solo and chamber performer and artistic accompaniment, the dimension of the candidate's contributions is locked. Her compositions enrich the fund of works by Bulgarian authors and give visibility to a rich worldview, realized with commendable freshness and compositional technique.

The piano recital "The Big World of Mikrokosmos" recreates with great mastery a selected performance of pieces from the six notebooks of Béla Bartók, covering all the subtleties of the motivic, intonation, melodic and harmonic gradation of the summaries that an outstanding composer created, elucidating part of her vision for approaches to contemporary music. In addition to being highly artistic, the concert also has a cultural and educational character, supported by an accompanying lecture-commentary by Prof. Dr. Tsanka Andreeva.

The piano recital "Fr. Chopin – Nocturnes" gives a definite idea of the instrumental and poetic-interpretive possibilities of Z. Petrova, who identified the classical type of pianism in its undeniable qualitative value.

The chamber concert with the US tenor Jamie Damon (Schubert, Massenet, P. Hadzhiev, positioned as a choice of repertoire in the realm of sublime feelings), left the mark of a full-fledged sound and bright experienced phenomenon.

The piano adaptation of the "Orpheus" Opera by Gluck enriched the concert bill with something rare as a realization and gave the opportunity to hear the "chamber reading" of a masterpiece of musical art.

#### **4. Contributions of the other presented habilitation materials and citations**

The two theoretical developments that the candidate presents in her reference have one essential similarity. It is in the fine sifting through the harsh aesthetic filter of classical music of the overall problematic, as well as of the summary analysis of premises, projections, juxtapositions, historical conditioning, messages, executive realization, and rehabilitation. The deep analytical penetration and very smooth and detailed thought of Zornitsa Petrova are the leading factor in these reliable pages for the researcher and conceptually consistent with the object of her research.

Especially remarkable is the project activity of Assoc. Prof. Petrova in her management of the National Academic Competition "Johann Sebastian Bach and His Contemporaries." In addition to saving (in the literal sense) this format, Assoc. Prof. Petrova managed not only to revive and develop it as a product of a developed spiritual cause and educational practice and experience, but also to bring it to a new image level as an international competition with the name "Johann Sebastian Bach Soli Deo Gloria."

#### **5. Personal impressions**

My impressions of Zornitsa Petrova date back to her earliest years. They also cover the full turnover of the cycle – from her assumption of office as an academic teacher (through numerous joint creative performances and in our capacity as colleagues from the same department) to the Department Head – Dean relationship.

Zornitsa Petrova is a person with a non-demonstrative, but sharpened towards the spiritual beginning, with a built-in ability to immerse herself in the things she does with thought and feeling. Responsible for her duties and original as a creator, she enjoys a solid reputation as a guardian of classical academic continuity. Possessing a special kind of internal censorship towards hasty results and easily digestible creative stereotypes, Assoc. Prof. Petrova conveys to her students a complete system of inspiring stimuli, through which they can build themselves as individuals and professionals with an original, culturally recognizable, and creative handwriting.

A brilliant professional, mastering the key resources for building a concert and academic prestige resource, Z. Petrova possesses the solid orientations of an individual liberated in her creative capacity. Her rich nature and culture are intense in the pursuit of achieving the best result of any creative design. The substantive moment in her activity is under the constant control of her creative will. Deriving the principles of her activity from a chaste and missionary consciousness in her initial impulse, Z. Petrova – a person with a rich cultural layering and a high ethical level, fills with the vitality of her artistic flight the strict symbolism of the classical and academic traditions.

#### **6. Conclusion**

Based on the materials presented in the Reference and the detailed research by me, I believe that the candidacy of Associate Professor Dr. Z. Petrova is defended at a high and content-filled academic level. Her overall activity has an unequivocally positive charge and is the result of progressively upgraded artistically, theoretically protected and constructively established activities as a model to follow.

**That is why I confidently and unreservedly recommend to the respected scientific jury that they award Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zornitsa Dimitrova Petrova with the academic position “PROFESSOR” under Professional field 8.3. “Music and Dance Arts,” specialty “Piano (Piano Accompaniment and Piano).”**

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Plovdiv

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