

PEER REVIEW

By Prof. Lozanka Peycheva, Doctor of Arts

Regarding the candidacy of Chief Assistant Dr. Zoya Mikova

Under competition for occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor”

Professional field 8.3 “Music and Dance Arts”, Specialty “Ethnomusicology” for the needs of the Musical Folklore Department, Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography announced by Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – City of Plovdiv (State Gazette, Issue 59/26.07.2019)

For participation in the competition for “Associate Professor” Chief Assistant Dr. Zoya Mikova, has submitted materials prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its implementation. The proposed documentation for participation in the competition contains: a completed table for individual fulfillment of the minimum national requirements and evidence material for indicators A, C, D, E and F (from the table). The attached Statement-declaration shows that for all groups of indicators the only participant in this competition successfully gathers the required number of points for the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for participation in the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor”.

For group “A” indicators: The candidate has successfully defended her dissertation work for the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in 2015 on the topic: “*Traditional Practices and Music of the Ethnic Communities in the City of Plovdiv*” – 50 points (with minimum required points: 50).

For group “C” indicators: Published habilitation work – a monograph entitled “*Milkovitsa – History, Ethnography and Culture*” (2019), Plovdiv – 100 points (with minimum required points: 100).

For group “D” indicators: Presented nine publications in specialized editions in the field of arts, in which, according to her participation, the candidate scores 127 points (with minimum required points: 120).

For group “E” indicators: Presented one citation in a collective volume with scientific peer review and 3 peer reviews of creative appearances and a collection of field materials that form 40 points (with minimum required points: 40)

For group “F” indicators: The candidate is head and main organizer of 2 academic projects: “The Unknown” Cultural Seminar at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, Plovdiv. The total number of points under group “E” indicators is 60 (with minimum required points: 50).

The presented habilitation work is published in a book entitled “*Milkovitsa – History, Ethnography and Culture*” (2019). In this study Zoya Mikova presents an expressive ethnography of her native village of Milkovitsa, Pleven District. Her internal and external research status helps her to narrate with sensitivity about the culture of the studied group, with which she has deep lived experience and shares a similar identity, and to interpret the data on the local community and its culture actively, systematically and appropriately, by making appropriate arguments for this. As an “internal” researcher Mikova was integrated and accepted with greater confidence by representatives of the studied local community (“My field work was supported by many followers and friends, by the unconditional help of all informants who

participated in the discussions, and especially by those who continued to be “my eyes and ears” in the village of Milkovitsa” (p. 12-13). The established network of like-minded friends and relatives depends on the indirect belonging of the researcher to their environment and enables the collection of rich and authentic quality data. As an “external”, distant observer with academic status, her field work is based on requirements that the ethnomusicologist profession places on practicing music ethnographers (“I have to admit that as a researcher it was very difficult for me to distance myself from the subject of my research and to remain as impartial as possible and to take on the role of an “external” and “side” observer of the people in the village, because at the same time as I was observing them, I was also observing myself” (p. 171). This “inevitable splitting” during field work requires the implementation of different strategies to deal with the specificities of the research environment and the community space. The special status of Dr. Mikova in this situation creates prerequisites for the covering of different “internal and external” aspects and layers of the culture of the settlement, helps to originally interpret the studied data, contributes to a more effective handling of the issues addressed in the study and increases its credibility.

In order to describe the population of Milkovitsa and its typical traditional practices, Zoya Mikova organized her field studies in the period from 1992 until 2019. The data presented and interpreted in the book is the result of this extensive field work. The first chapter examines in detail the historical, geographical and demographic processes related to urban history, and traces the history of cultural, religious and educational institutions in the village. The second chapter introduces the memory of the holiday calendar and traditional local practices as distinctive cultural signs for the residents of Milkovitsa. Their specificity is convincingly presented, which is clearly shown in calendar and family customs (Male Lazaritsa; “*Razlivane na voda*” /*Water spilling*/ on Maundy Thursday; Easter commemorative round dances; the “*Kalush*” games; Elevation of the Holy Cross; some commemorative practices, etc.). The life cycle events and the calendar activities studied are presented both as a “continuous renewal of traditional practices” and as “some kind of theatrical play” and standardization of the repertoire in some individual rituals (for example, “*Lazaruvane*” /on St. Lazar’s Day/). The third chapter focuses on the music and dance culture of the village of Milkovitsa, characterized as “extremely diverse”. Particular attention is paid to the characteristic local music practices that are an expression of the way of life in the village. All of the presented local music formations (brass music, vocal formations and singers, amateur male choir, the children’s vocal group to the school, the Milkovchanka Folk Group, etc.) are a functional and integral part of social events in both personal and community life. The significant ethnographic empirical volume and the proposed interpretations give a comprehensive look at the specifics of the local tradition studied and present a complete and useful monographic research with a strong contribution to settlement studies.

Dr. Zoya Mikova actively participates in research and scientific and practical projects. “The Unknown” Cultural Seminar, initiated and organized in two editions (2016, 2018) aims at broadening the knowledge of the different ethnic communities in Bulgaria and at promoting their traditional cultural practices. The project is carried out in three modules: artistic and creative; theoretical and a photo exhibition. Both editions of the project showed a growing interest in this large-scale event, which engages masters, doctoral students and postdoctoral students from the three faculties of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, researchers from other scientific and educational institutions from Bulgaria and abroad, as well as representatives of different ethnic communities. The increasing number of participants in these seminars and the spatial expansion of the idea through the traveling exhibition “The Unknown” show that these hybrid manifestations are important for both science and practice.

The reference on the contributions, presented in the documentation under the competition, formulates a total of 15 contributions that focus on the following main thematic areas: related to the study of traditional practices of different ethnic communities in Bulgaria; related to empirical settlement studies on traditional practices and music; and related to the relationship between traditional culture and contemporary education.

Dr. Zoya Mikova is a teacher with serious pedagogical activity at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, Plovdiv. Throughout her teaching career (2003 – 2010 – part-time lecturer; 2010 – 2017 – full-time assistant; after 2017 – chief assistant), Dr. Mikova has had a significant teaching load. She also conducts classes and exams in various disciplines (“Musical Folklore”, “History of Folk Performing Arts”, “Bulgarian Folklore”, “Bulgarian Ethnography”, “Collection and Decoding of Musical Folklore” and “Music Theory”). She also organizes the “Martenitsa” Exhibition annually in the lobby of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, as well as a student Concert Review Performance with traditional costumes at the Hall of the Academy – both events as part of the “Musical Folklore” course. Her teaching work covers the organization and conduct of field studies and student expeditions in different villages of Bulgaria as part of the training in the discipline “Collection and Decoding of Musical Folklore”. The many years of extensive teaching experience and organized extracurricular activities reveal significant pedagogical practice, dedication and academic qualification of Chief Assistant Dr. Zoya Mikova.

Conclusion:

The entire scientific and teaching activity, with which Chief Assistant Dr. Zoya Mikova participates in the competition for occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor” in the specialty “Ethnomusicology”, shows that she meets the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its implementation. All this gives me reason to support her candidacy and propose that she be elected for the academic position “Associate Professor” for the needs of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts.