

## **REVIEW**

by

**Prof Anton Hristov Andonov, PhD**

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts

"Prof Asen Diamandiev"-Plovdiv

on

Dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree

**“DOCTOR”**

Professional field (code 8.3) “Music and dance Art”,

Doctoral program “Choreography”

Doctoral student: **Dushanka Gradishki Ivanova**, doctoral student at the Department of

Choreography of the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography – AMDFA

“Prof Asen Diamandiev”

Topic: **The role of the Russian ballet school in the creation of ballet in America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Comparative analysis between the American and the Russian ballet schools**

**Scientific adviser:** Prof Lilyana Draguleva

This review is prepared on the basis of Order RD-27068/ 22.10.2020 of the Rector of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv, regarding the approval of a scientific jury and the presented by the doctoral student dissertation work, abstract, reference for the contributions to the dissertation work, publications on the topic of the dissertation, in accordance with the requirements of Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), and the Regulations for its implementation, for obtaining educational and scientific degree“ doctor ”.

**Dushanka Gradishki Ivanova** is an established educator with rich artistic biography in the field of classical dance. She works in various ballet theatres and schools, where she proves to be an exceptional ballet performer, pedagogue and artist. Her talent is present on the world stages in classical works of the ballet genre, with a rich repertoire from Macedonia, USA, Russia, France, Croatia, and Bulgaria. All this expands her artistic range and potential, and makes her an important expert in the field of classical dance. Over the years Dushanka Gradishki proves her great professional experience gained over the years and successfully realized in the preparation and the development of future performers in the field of dance.

Apparently, the choice of topic **“The role of the Russian ballet school in the creation of ballet in America in the 20th century. Comparative analysis between the American and**

**the Russian ballet schools”**, for this dissertation is mainly due to the fact that the doctoral student works in the school of American classical dance – on the one hand, and on the other, the unexplored territory for the influence of the Russian school in America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Provoked by the processes of globalization in the modern world, as well as the lack of in-depth research in this field, the author manages to delve deeper into this serious issue, and attempts to offer answers to questions related to the active work of many European dancers, choreographers and educators in America. She focuses on tracing the path of dance, and classical ballet in particular, from its inception and development in America, offering extremely detailed information about many professionals and their careers. Dushanka Gradishki presents a study that is necessary for the dance science with practical applicability in the training of performers and artists in the classical genre.

The dissertation work consists of 193 pages, and is structured in **introduction, seven chapters, conclusions, contributions and bibliography** including 45 titles and Internet sources of 22 links.

The research demonstrates the necessary competence. The narrative is accurate, clear and legible. The significant amount of the used scientific literature is correctly and precisely mentioned.

The **Introduction** emphasizes the relevance of the problem and its significance. The objective, tasks and methods of the research are presented solidly. The objective specifies the tasks that structure the individual chapters in theoretical and practical aspects. It also diligently identifies the *object* – the “classical dance in America”, and the *subject* – “the role of Western-European and Russian ballet master, dancers and educators in laying the foundations of classical dance in America”. The development of the dissertation offers valuable conclusions, which make the information in it practically applicable.

The review of the scientific literature is an in-depth reading of theoretical research conducted in the libraries of Tampa, St. Petersburg, Miami, and the New York Public Library for Performing Arts. The author is provoked by the lack of materials in Bulgarian, Serbian and Macedonian, and I would like to note her serious contribution to the study of rich scientific material related to translations from English. Accordingly, Mrs. Gradishki presents scientific conclusions and summaries, which are aimed at the main goal of the work and are proof of its purposeful long-term scientific and in-depth work. She also manages to analyse valuable information from her research, which leads her to the knowledge of the beginning, the development of the classical dance in America, and the influence of the Russian school.

The **first chapter** provides an overview and historical analysis of the birth of the American nation and, accordingly, the relationship between the traditional dances of the

indigenous population and the influence of the new settlers. The author makes chronological and thorough review of the emergence of the dance in the American practice from Great Britain.

The **contribution** of the candidate in this chapter is the discussion of authors, works and publications, impressive with the historical facts and the author's knowledge. The emphasis is on the distinction and popularity of the French dances, coming from Europe, which have taken a permanent place in the American practice.

In the **second chapter** "Italian influence on the dance in America" Dushanka Ivanova examines in historical terms the development of classical dance and the influence of Italian ballet dancers on the American dance style. Specific details are given for peoples that play an important role in the influence on the theatres in Boston, New York and Philadelphia. The study very clearly marks two names with special contribution to the American ballet, which are one of the founders of professional training in the performing arts, namely: Malvina Cavalazzi – founder of the ballet school at the Metropolitan Opera, which is considered as a historic moment for the American ballet, and Luigi Albertieri, who is considered the last great representative of the Italian ballet school of the nineteenth century in the United States.

In the **third chapter**, the focus is on the contribution of the Austrian ballerina Fanny Elssler, who danced in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She was a huge success in promoting *romantic ballet* in America and had an incredible impact on the artistic growth of a number of ballet dancers in Philadelphia. A significant contribution in this chapter is the detailed examination of four ballet dancers with extraordinary and outstanding contributions to the development of the American classical dance – Mary Ann Lee, George Washington Smith, Julia Turnbull and Augusta Maywood. Mrs. Gradishki presents in great depth their incredible performance in various productions and huge success as soloists, considered ballet stars in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The author dwells in detail on their performing qualities and repertoire, presenting a complete picture of the founders of American classical dance.

**Chapter four** takes us on a search for new forms of dance that are an expression of the modern society and the constant social changes. Chronologically and in detail, dancers have been studied and analyzed, each of whom has left his own handwriting and style in his performing practice - Loie Fuller, Maud Allan, Isadora Duncan, Ruth Saint-Denis, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham. The author makes valuable conclusions about the innovations brought by the performers, namely: theatricality and abstractness in the dance, stage concrete image, the relationship between body and soul - as a natural expression of the state of the dancer.

**Chapter Five** – "The Origin of Ballet in America", very specifically introduces us to the topic of the dissertation. Questions about the origins of ballet in America are pointed out and

analysed in detail. The doctoral candidate studies and follows in great depth the contribution of the Russian ballet specialists in the development of a national ballet with an American identity. She singles out two names that are the reason for the development of dance in America, such as Anna Pavlova and choreographer Mikhail Mordkin. The great ballerina Pavlova hugely contributed to the growth and influence of the classical dance in America, and accordingly she *“has built a bridge between the classical Russian style of Petipa and the experimental work of Diaghilev’s “Ballets Russes”. The complex and versatile personality of Anna Pavlova leaves an unforgettable imprint on American ballet history”*.

**Chapter six** presents the age of the American Renaissance in the art of dance and its aesthetic principles of abstraction and expressionism. The emphasis is on merging the traditional dance with the modern one, setting the beginning of a new wave – “theatrical dance”. In this way the taste of the audience is differentiated when evaluating the form and content in the abstract expression of the body and its emotions. The author also draws attention to Diaghilev's reforms as a concept of traditionalism and modernism. *“Under his protection, ballet in America not only prospered, but also gained enormous prestige.”* In addition, in this chapter Dushanka Ivanova pays special attention and explores the Russian dancer, choreographer, pedagogue and director Mikhail Fokine. She emphasizes his choreographic and pedagogical activities, which are especially significant and set new directions in the ballet development in both Europe and America. His huge contribution draws new paths for liberation from classical techniques and constructions according to the needs of style and internal logic. In addition, the doctoral student emphasizes Fokine's role in the revival of the male dance, creating for the male dancer expressive roles equal to those of the ballerinas. In conclusion, she emphasizes that *“Fokine is considered the father of ballet in the twentieth century.”*

**Chapter seven** offers a detailed and research comparative analysis between the Russian and the American ballet schools. Attention is focused on the influence of the European schools - French, Italian, Danish, but the highest priority is given to the Russian. Undoubtedly, an important role in this played by international stars of Russian origin, such as Rudolf Nureev, Natalia Makarova, Mikhail Baryshnikov and George Balanchine, culminating in his professional activity. In response, the author summarizes *“With Balanchine's contribution, the phenomenon “Russian ballet” firmly takes its position in the minds of the Americans. In 1934, Balanchine founded the School of American Ballet, where he taught students the “Balanchine technique” he had developed”*. Major contribution in this chapter are the conclusions about the specifics in historical, stylistic and technical aspects between the Russian and American ballet schools. This can be viewed as a conclusion of the overall presentation in the doctoral work, and response to the set objective and tasks.

In my opinion, the topic of the dissertation is useful and especially important for the modern research tendencies of the classical dance art.

My assessment of the four publications on the dissertation published in 2018 and 2019 is positive. As a choice, the topics are related to the dissertation, which meets the requirements for the defense of a dissertation work.

The **author's abstract** meets the standards and accurately conveys the essence of the dissertation, and the relevant conclusions are made. The contributions are precisely indicated.

From all the above, I declare my support for the dissertation “**The role of the Russian ballet school in the creation of ballet in America in the 20th century. Comparative analysis between the American and the Russian ballet schools**”, and I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award **Dushanka Gradishki Ivanova** the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**” in Professional Field 8.3 “Music and Dance Art”, doctoral program “Choreography”.

**29.12.2020**

**Plovdiv**

**Prof Anton Andonov, PhD**