

OPINION

by

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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 20th century. Comparative analysis between the American and the Russian ballet schools**

Scientific adviser: Prof Lilyana Draguleva

This opinion 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” and scientific degree “doctor of sciences”.

I. General characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation

The biography and professional career of the author of the dissertation proposed for review, Dushanka Gradishki Ivanova, clearly suggests the reason for the orientation to the researched 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*”. The development of Dushanka Gradishki is connected with the ballet dance, during her training at AMDFA “Prof. Asen Diamandiev” as a student in the Bachelor program Ballet Pedagogy and the Master program in Choreography and Directing. An important part of her biography is the performing, pedagogical and artistic work carried out in Europe and America. The accumulated experience on two continents makes it possible for a serious study,

which finds its place in the scientific and theoretical basis of modern research trends. The formulated topic of the dissertation is relevant for the current 21st century and has a theoretical significance, the verification of which is reflected in the author's direct research in tracing the path of dance and in particular classical ballet, from its inception and development in America, with extremely detailed information about many specialists and their work.

The dissertation consists of 193 pages and includes an introduction, presentation in seven chapters, conclusions and contributions. I would recommend to restructure the presentation and consolidate the text into three individual chapters: The beginning of dance as a form of cultural expression in America in the 17th and 18th century, the Influence of the Western European ballet, the Russian classical school and its presence in America. This, in turn, would allow for the formation of separate paragraphs with clear conclusions. The list of used literature sources consists of 45 sources, as well as 22 Internet resources.

The **Introduction** substantiates the significance of the problem from the perspective of the concept of dance in the United States as “*a diverse and complex cultural phenomenon constructed from all aspects of yje American history: immigration, settlement, and cultural contacts; development of industry, economy and business; various religious and philosophical views; various manifestations in social life and entertainment.*” The lack of in-depth research in this area has provoked the author to delve deeper into this serious issue and try to offer answers to questions related to the active work of many European dancers, choreographers and educators in America. 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 objective specifies the tasks presented in a theoretical aspect.

The **review of the scientific literature** is an in-depth reading of theoretical research conducted mostly 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. Here I should note the serious contribution to the study of rich scientific material related to translations from English and presented summaries and conclusions aimed at the main goal, which is the result of purposeful and in-depth work.

The analysis of the published theoretical sources is made by tracing the origin and development in, cultural and historical terms, of dance in America. The theoretical foundations of the development of the classical dance are analysed with an emphasis on the large number of world ballet dancers, their contribution to the development of ballet in Russia and Europe and their influence in the creation of ballet in America. The information situates

the object of the research in works of different authors, whose conclusions are the basis for the research tasks of the present dissertation. The author manages to bring out those useful elements for her research, which lead to the expansion of the knowledge of the beginning, the development of the classical dance in America and the influence of the Russian school.

In the **first chapter**, examining the historical specifics of the birth of the American nation, the doctoral student skilfully seeks the connection between the traditions of the indigenous population and the influence of the new settlers. The review shows the emergence of the European dance art initially in the British-controlled colonies, where along with English folk dances were taught exquisite French dances. The doctoral student concludes that historical circumstances confirm the popularity of the French dances. The **second chapter** focuses on the Italian influence on the dance in America. Deserved attention is paid to each Italian ballet dancer who has made individual contribution to the development of the American dance style. The names of Malvina Cavalazzi – founder of the ballet school at the Metropolitan Opera, the opening of which the author describes as “*a historic moment for 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*. The **third chapter** is dedicated to Fanny Elssler's contribution to the popularization of the romantic ballet in America. Her incredible performing influence in various ballet productions inspired the establishment of the first four extremely talented American dancers - Mary Ann Lee, George Washington Smith, Julia Turnbull and Augusta Maywood. The chapter offers detailed information about the career of each of. Aspects of their personal contribution are highlighted: Mary Ann Lee - the first performer of *Giselle's* original version in America, Julia Turnbull – travels to America “*as a soloist and rivals the European stars*”, Augusta Maywood – “*She is the first American to she received the rank of prima ballerina in Europe, and critics compared her to the great romantic ballerinas of the 19th century.*”, George Washington Smith – in addition to his unique performing qualities, he also teaches at his own school in Philadelphia.

After a comprehensive review of factors of various nature and in-depth analysis, the doctoral student concludes that in the 19th century “*The success of the European dancers, although not creating traditions in dance, stimulates the talent of Americans.*” **Chapter four** justifies the search for new forms of dance. It examines in detail the career of dancers, each of whom has left their own handwriting and style in their performing practice - Loie Fuller, Maud Allan, Isadora Duncan, Ruth Saint-Denis, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham. The in-depth analysis of their work leads to the conclusion that they “bring a new theatricality and

abstractness to the dance, relying more on the images than on the plot. *They study the relationship between body and soul, completely abandoning classical ballet forms.*” **Chapter five** very precisely introduces us to the essence and issues related to the main topic of the dissertation. It discusses fundamental questions about the origin of ballet in America. Following the contribution of the Russian immigrants in development of a national ballet with an American identity, the doctoral student pays special attention to the work of Anna Pavlova and the choreographer Mikhail Mordkin, emphasizing their personal achievements. *“Pavlova prepares the audience with her endless tours, and Mordkin's work as a teacher in New York builds a whole new generation of American dancers.”* The **sixth chapter** focuses on *“The Age of the American Renaissance in the Art of Dance and Its Aesthetic Principles of Abstraction and Expressionism”*. The significant factors influencing the development of dance in America are listed in separate paragraphs. Special attention is paid to *“Diaghilev's reforms as a concept of traditionalism and modernism”*. After reviewing the achievements of Diaghilev's “Ballets Russes”, the doctoral student concludes that *“Without Diaghilev, the history of ballet in Europe and America in the twentieth century would be quite different. Under his protection, ballet in America not only prospered, but also gained enormous prestige”*. Special attention is paid to the Russian dancer, choreographer, pedagogue and director Mikhail Fokine. The comprehensive study of his life and career emphasizes the importance not only of the choreographic, but also of his educational work, which undoubtedly draw new directions in the development of ballet both in Europe and in America.

Chapter seven makes comparative analysis of the Russian and American ballet schools and summarizes the specifics determining their characteristics both in historical and stylistic aspect. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the greatest impetus to American ballet comes from the Russian Ballet. This chapter can also be viewed as a conclusion of the overall presentation in response to the set objectives and the resulting tasks.

Dushanka Gradishki has four publications on the topic of her dissertation. The publications made fully meet the requirements in terms of number and content, for admission to public defense.

The author's abstract consists of 55 pages. It reflects the size of the dissertation correctly and accurately - both the content and the conclusions and scientific contributions.

II. Summary of the results and evaluation of the candidate's contributions

There are real scientific contributions of the dissertation research, which are important for enriching this field of knowledge related to classical dance in America and the influence

of the European and Russian ballet schools. The research successfully achieves its objectives not only in the theoretical problems, but also in achieving scientific results. I fully accept the six general contributions of the work, which are analytically presented and reliably highlighted.

The reviewed dissertation has a serious scientific value. It meets the requirements of DASRBA and the regulations for its implementation. The author presents a high-value dissertation text, which is an achievement in her individual scientific work.

I recommend the text to be designed and published as a practical guide intended not only for choreographers and professionals, but also for all who are interested in the art of dance.

III. Conclusion

Based on all of the above, I hereby give my **positive assessment** of 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”.

17.12.2020
Varna

Prepared by:
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