

OPINION

by

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Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev"-Plovdiv, on

Dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree

“DOCTOR”

Author: **Dushanka Gradishki Ivanova,**

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**

The author of the dissertation is a ballet master with significant experience as artist, educator and performer. Pursuing her career in the field of ballet, Dushanka Gradishki has come a long way from the State Musical Ballet high School Ilija Nikolovski-Luj” – Skopje where she studied in the period 1979-1983, to the Ballet Academy of St. Petersburg, Florida where she is currently artistic director and choreographer. The stages of her ascending development include specialization at the Vaganova Ballet Academy - St. Petersburg, Russia in 1985 and 1986, as well as two Master’s degrees in ballet art in 2000 at AMDFA Plovdiv - Ballet Pedagogy and Ballet Directing. She speaks fluently 5 languages, which helps her in her work of a prominent ballet specialist, over the years she organizes symposia and seminars, participates in international competitions, contemporary dance festivals, is a member of international juries, and teaches master classes in Florida, USA. Thus, the knowledge and skills acquired over the years in the field of ballet art and education, predetermine the scientific interests of the candidate.

The proposed dissertation studies the emergence of ballet in America and in particular the role of the Russian Ballet School in its formation in the 20th century. Four publications were made during the doctoral program, two of which were presented as reports at international scientific conference at AMDFA. The enclosed Abstract consists of 55 pages and accurately and analytically reflects the content and ideas presented in the dissertation. The main work is 201 pages, structured in introduction, seven chapters, conclusions and scientific contributions. The bibliography used includes 46 titles, almost all of which are in English from libraries in New York, Tampa, Miami and St. Petersburg, Florida. There are 22 electronic sources with publications on the topic. The text brought to our attention is easy and fascinating to read, and definitely emanates competence and creativity. At the very beginning,

the candidate summarizes the message: *“There were countless questions, but no answers. The missing pieces of the puzzle had to be found and put in their place”*. The introduction presents the objective and the tasks, but does not specify the research methods used in the doctoral dissertation. The following is an overview of research on the subject. After the introduction there is an overview of the researches done on the topic. Chapter one discusses the role of dance as a social phenomenon in America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Chapter two gradually moves to the first performances of dance artists in America, it examines their origin and work. Chapter three enters the 19th century and the first ballet performances influenced by Fanny Elssler. Next is chapter four, which discusses the pursuit of new dance forms, product of American culture: Loie Fuller, Maud Allan, Isadora Duncan, Ruth Saint-Denis, Ted Shawn, and his male dancers. The author discusses in details the career of Martha Graham, and the characteristic styles for each of them. She ends with the conclusion that: *“In fact, ballet failed to win supporters in the United States until the early 20th century”*. Chapters five and six are dedicated to the origins of ballet in America and its development under Russian influence. The contribution of Anna Pavlova, Mikhail Mordkin, especially Sergei Diaghilev and Mikhail Fokine is studied. The author analyses emblematic works from the age of the “American Renaissance”, as this period of upheaval for the ballet is called. The last chapter is a comparative analysis of the Russian and the American ballet schools. The conclusion is definitely meaningful and offers solid arguments about the role of the Russian ballet in the creation and development of classical ballet in the United States. Unfortunately, these conclusions are not presented individually, but are combined with the contributions. The table of content is left for the end and has no page numbers, which makes it difficult to work with it.

The structure and the exposition of the text create an impression more of a fiction than of a scientific dissertation, but the work is informative, and achieves definite scientific contributions. The chosen topic provokes interest by asking relevant questions and drawing useful conclusions about the comparative analysis between the Russian and the American ballet schools. The doctoral student knows the problem “from within”, having studied and specialized in the methodology of the Russian school, she has been teaching and creating ballet in the USA for almost 20 years. It is obvious that in addition to the rich review of the scientific literature on the subject, she offers original conclusions and contributions to the main objective of the dissertation – to study the development of ballet in America.

In conclusion, I will emphasize that the presented thorough research presented in 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”, together with the attached reports on the topic, as well as the convincing artistic and pedagogical achievements of Dushanka Gradishki Ivanova, give me reason to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award her educational and scientific degree “Doctor”, professional field 8.3. “Music and dance art”, doctoral program “Choreography”, specialty “Ballet Art”.

04.01.2021

Signature:

/Prof Daniela Dzheneva, PhD/