

OPINION

by **Prof Anelia Yaneva, PhD**

South-West University "Neofit Rilski"

Institute for Arts Studies at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor

Professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art

Doctoral program "Choreography"

To the doctoral candidate: Marina Bankova

With dissertation titled: **The Dance Folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians**

Academic supervisor: Prof Daniela Dzheneva, PhD

The doctoral candidate Marina Bankova was enrolled in a full-time doctoral program with a period of study from 01.11.2015 to 1.11.2018 and discharged with the right to defense on 20.12.2018, and on 05.07.2023 her dissertation work was discussed and referred for public defense.

Marina Bankova is born in Moldova, with a professional background in Moldova and in Bulgaria, which allows her to draw parallels and scientific research in both countries. She studied Bulgarian folk dances at the Choreographic Studio for Bulgarian folk dances at the Moldova Philharmonic, based in the "Stefan Neaga" Music and Choreography School, and after graduation was a ballet dancer in the Ensemble for Bulgarian Folk Songs and Dances of the Moldova Philharmonic, Teraclia branch. She received her higher education in Bulgaria – at AMDFA-Plovdiv, where she obtains Bachelor's degrees (1998) and Master's degrees (1999) in the specialty Bulgarian Folk Choreography, while at the same time she was a ballet dancer at the Academy's Ballet Ensemble.

In 2002, Marina Bankova becomes director and choreographer of the Ensemble for Bulgarian folk songs and dances "Rodolyubie" in Taraclia, Moldova. She also teaches at the "Stefan Neaga" College of Music in Chisinau, branch Tvarditsa in the disciplines Bulgarian Folk Dances, Classical Dances, Dances of the Nations and Choreographic Composition (2006-2017-2022). She is also teacher and leader of Dance Ensemble Badniche at the National Palace of Children in Sofia (2012-2017; 2022-2023).

She stages *Shopska Zadyavka* (2008), *Bessarabian Motifs in Bulgarian* (2022) in Moldova; *Severnyashka Suite*, *Shopski Dance*, *Children's Games*, *Daichovo Dance* in the Dance Ensemble "Badnice" directed by her, as well as *Quadrille*, *Tarantella*, *Hopak* – at the "School of Dances of the nations" at the National Palace of Children. She enjoys the unreserved love of her students, some of whom have been her students since kindergarten.

Having pursued career as artist, teacher, choreographer, Marina Bankova turned to research.

Her dissertation – *The Dance Folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians* – is dedicated to a little-studied topic. It consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, contributions, a list of sources

and a bibliography with a total volume of 207 pages, of which 202 pages are main text. The bibliography includes 62 books in Bulgarian, Russian and Latin; and archival materials from the Institute for Arts Research at the BAS.

The dissertation work is very well structured - from the general to the particular - from geographical location and historical information about the Bessarabian Bulgarians in Moldova, Teraclia region (Chapter 2) to an analysis of the dance folklore in the cities of Taraclia and Tvarditsa, as well as in the villages of Kairaklia and Korten (Chapter 3). In particular, the author dwells on dances and performances such as *Tri Nasreshta*; *Alunelu*; *Kadanja*, which are popular in all the settlements of southern Moldova and the whole of Bessarabia, and she perceives them as an integrating and differentiating mark for the local Bulgarian population. The available literature on the subject (Chapter 1) and the studies of other researchers - Georgi Yankov, Raina Katsarova, Galin Georgiev – are also mentioned in order to reach basic conclusions about the style and the character of the dance folklore performed by the Bulgarians in Moldova and all of Bessarabia (at the end of Chapter 3). The last chapter (4) comments on the occasions and places for dancing, focusing on the Sunday dance, the evening dance, the gathering, traditional dances in the family rituals, and dance folklore in the calendar rites. The author also makes periodization of the dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians - before and now. The dissertation reveals a very good professional knowledge of the researched material, which gives reason to fully trust the conclusions of Marina Bankova regarding the preservation and development of the music-dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians.

Among the contributions of the dissertation are the similarities between the traditions of the Bessarabian Bulgarians in Moldova and in Bulgaria (with similar examples from Trakia and Dobrudza regions). New choreographic productions based on the original dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians are also commented on – for example, *Bessarabian Suite*, choreography by Vasil Radev; *Bessarabian Dance*, choreography by Petar Dimitrov; *Bessarabian Motives in Bulgarian*, choreography by Marina Bankova, which aim to popularize and interpret the dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians in a new way.

Among the final summarizing touches (in the Conclusion), I would highlight the discovery that "*The generation of Bulgarians in Bessarabia, who have lived most of their conscious life in the last century, does not recognize the folklore imported from today's Bulgaria as their own. Although fascinated by the songs and dances of Trakia, Dobrudzha, Pirin and other regions in all their beauty and richness, which gradually but steadily arrive from the homeland, the Bulgarians from the diaspora still cannot acknowledge that this is theirs, i.e. "our" folklore*". In this sense, the Bessarabian Bulgarians preserve older folklore models of dances and performances, and when Bulgarian dance ensembles in Moldova offer newer works borrowed from the diverse folklore of today's Bulgaria, the Bessarabian Bulgarians do not recognize them as "their own, Bulgarian" - they definitely prefer "*music-dance works based on folklore from the ancestors who already lived in the Budjak lands*". This

brings to mind the comparisons between the modern Bulgarian language and the Old Bulgarian language. But the author Marina Bankova successfully proves this interesting phenomenon.

The **abstract** corresponds in meaning and content to what is written in the dissertation.

Four articles have been published on the subject of the dissertation:

1. Bankova, M. (2017) *The ring-dance as a holiday festivity of the Bessarabian Bulgarians. /on materials from the village of Kairaklia and the town of Taraclia, Moldova/* - In: Spring Scientific Readings 2017, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, ISSN 1314-7005, pp. 145-151.
2. Bankova, M. (2018) *Tri Nasreshta - the popular game of the Bessarabian Bulgarians. /on materials collected from the village of Kairaklia, the town of Taraklia and the town of Tvardica, Moldova/*. - In: Yearbook 2018, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, ISSN 1313-6526, pp. 272-283.
3. Bankova, M. (2022) *Influences in the formation of a traditional ring-dance for Bulgarians in Moldova*. – In: Yearbook 2022, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, ISSN 1313-6526, pp. 204-212.
4. Bankova, M. (2022) *The dance as a means of self-determination of ethnicity among young Bessarabian Bulgarians*. - In: Collection of materials of the international pedagogical forum, "Actual issues and modern aspects in the educational system", Comrat - 2022, ISBN 978-9975-165-28-0, p.188 - 192.

I believe that Marina Bankova's dissertation is valuable for the preservation of knowledge about ethnic groups, which in our modern society could be blurred. Analyzing and systematizing the folklore dances of the Bessarabian Bulgarians in Moldova, comparing them with the music and dance folklore of Moldova on the one hand, and Bulgaria on the other, the dissertation conclusively proves that the dances of the Bessarabian Bulgarians in Moldova differ from the dances of the Bulgarians in today Bulgaria, but it is through their folklore that our compatriots in southern Moldova feel Bulgarian.

The studied interactions between the dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians in Moldova and those in today's Bulgaria are one of the contributions of the dissertation, which successfully fits into the mission of understanding and popularizing the Bulgarian culture outside of Bulgaria as well.

I would like to especially congratulate the academic supervisor Prof Daniela Dzheneva for the skillful guidance of the doctoral candidate and for their overall success.

And I confidently propose to the highly respected Scientific Jury to award Marina Bankova the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional direction 8.3. – Music and dance art.

18.09.2023

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