

REVIEW

by **Prof. Vesela Ivanova Geleva, PhD**, lecturer in Choral Conducting at the Department of Music Pedagogy and Conducting of the Faculty of Music Pedagogy at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts - Plovdiv*

for **Senior Assistant Professor Aliya Sahl Hanse, PhD**, candidate in the competition for the academic position of 'Associate Professor' in the major *Vocal Ensembles and Academic Opera Theatre*, professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts - Plovdiv*, Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performance Art, announced in the State Gazette, issue No. 16 / 10.02.2026.

Aliya Hanse was born in 1993 in Razgrad. She graduated from the *Panayot Pipkov National School of Arts in Pleven* and subsequently completed her higher education at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts - Plovdiv*, earning a Master's degree in the major *Folk Ensembles Conducting*. In 2021, on the basis of a successfully defended doctoral dissertation entitled *Theoretical and Analytical Aspects of the Unity between Poetry and Music in Ivan Spasov's Solo Art Songs*, she was awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD). Following training at the Department of Language and Specialized Training of *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts*, she obtained certificates in *Symphonic and Opera Conducting* (2021) and *Teacher of Music in Kindergartens and Schools* (2022). Aliya Hanse has participated in a number of national and international projects, including *Orpheus Talents*, the Academic Opera Theatre (AOT), *Made at the Academy*, and the international Erasmus+ project *Opera and Early Childhood Education*, involving partner organizations from Spain, Italy, and Bulgaria, as well as the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme *Voice and Percussion* in Poland, among others. She is the conductor of *Pro Belcanto Vocal Ensemble*, *Evmolpeya Girls' Choir Formation* at the Center for Personal Development Support - Children's Complex, Plovdiv, *Stefka Blagoeva Male Choir*, and *Panagyurtsi Men's Chamber Choir*.

Senior Assistant Professor Aliya Hanse, PhD is the author of numerous papers and scholarly articles and is the recipient of awards from the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Academic Competition *Johann Sebastian Bach and His Era*, a diploma for originality of creative ideas from the IV Student Conducting Competition *The Golden Baton* (2016, Shumen), a diploma for the skilled leadership of *Stefka Blagoeva Male Choir* and its distinguished performance at the International Festival of Orthodox Music *Theotokos - It is Truly Meet* in Pomorie, as well as a diploma for the successful participation of *Panagyurtsi Men's Chamber Choir* at the Tenth Jubilee International Festival of Male Choirs *Saint Ivan of Rila* in Dupnitsa (2019). She is also the recipient of the award *Golden Lyre of Orpheus* (2024) for participation in *Orpheus Talents International Competition for Music, Dance, and Fine Arts* with the production *Blue Monday* by the Academic Opera Theatre, as well as two additional *Golden Lyre of Orpheus*

awards from *Orpheus Talents* with *Pro Belcanto* Vocal Ensemble of the Academic Opera Theatre.

The submitted Statement of Compliance with the Minimum National Requirements, provided by the candidate, demonstrates a multifaceted and active professional realization that exceeds the required minimum number of points. Even with her doctoral dissertation entitled *Theoretical and Analytical Aspects of the Unity between Poetry and Music in Ivan Spasov's Solo Art Songs*, Aliya Hanse reveals a profound scholarly interest in vocal art and issues of interpretation. Published in book form, the study represents the first comprehensive and systematically structured examination of Ivan Spasov's art songs for soprano and accompaniment. The works are analyzed in their entirety, with emphasis placed on their significant place within the composer's oeuvre, with the aim of further advancing both scholarly and performance-oriented engagement with them. The book also includes interviews offering valuable interpretative guidance on Ivan Spasov's artistic output, drawing on the extensive experience of Prof. Vasilka Spasova, Prof. Roxana Bogdanova, and Prof. Zornitsa Petrova, PhD.

The candidate's leading artistic achievements are closely connected to her work as conductor of the Academic Opera Theatre at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev* Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. These include productions of *Blue Monday* by George Gershwin, *L'elisir d'amore* by Gaetano Donizetti, selected scenes from *Il trovatore* by Giuseppe Verdi and *Le nozze di Figaro* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *The Gambler* by Luigi Cherubini, *The Telephone* by Gian Carlo Menotti, and *Bastien und Bastienne* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. With some of these productions, the Academic Opera Theatre has participated in various musical forums, including *Made at the Academy* at the Roman Stadium in Plovdiv, the Chamber Opera Festival at *Lumière Hall* of the National Palace of Culture in Sofia, *Orpheus Talents* International Competition in Plovdiv, and the XXII National Scientific Conference with International Participation on the theme *The Society of Knowledge and Humanism of the 21st Century*, held at UNIBIT in Sofia. The production *Blue Monday* received the award *Golden Lyre of Orpheus* at the International Competition for Music, Dance, and Fine Arts *Orpheus Talents* in 2024.

The Academic Opera Theatre is a music-stage practical course in which students from the major *Performance Art - Classical Singing* are trained. The course provides numerous opportunities for the development of young singers by helping them accumulate experience, build repertoire, and gain access to various forms of stage performance. Particularly valuable is the opportunity to work under real performance conditions with professionals such as a vocal coach, conductor, stage director, set designer, and others, which contributes to the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills, as well as the development of stage experience and confidence. The work within the Academic Opera Theatre is based on teamwork among students from different majors, including classical singing, instrumental performance, conducting, stage directing, scenography and costume design, stage lighting, dance and movement, music journalism, graphic design, and others. Alongside their musical training, students are also encouraged to develop discipline, professional attitude, perseverance,

responsibility, and artistic ethics. As the principal course instructor, Senior Assistant Professor Aliya Hanse, PhD is responsible for leading the process of production creation, logistics, organization, promotion, and the overall presentation of the completed artistic product.

A specific aspect that has become increasingly relevant in recent years should be explicitly mentioned, namely the work with international students, in particular those from China who study classical singing at undergraduate and doctoral levels. This new vocal resource at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts* has considerable artistic and academic potential; however, it also requires a different methodological and communicative approach. Language barriers, the specifics of Chinese phonetics and articulation in relation to European operatic repertoire, the need for developing aural experience, the assimilation of non-traditional repertoire for the learners, and differences in aesthetic perception and musical taste are only part of the challenges that teaching staff face on a daily basis. In this context, consistency, patience, and a benevolent professional attitude are essential factors for achieving meaningful pedagogical results.

The reviewed scholarly works include five papers on diverse topics. In two of them, A. Hanse focuses on the figure of Ivan Spasov. On the one hand, the topic of the place of folklore in his oeuvre is examined (*Collected Papers from the Jubilee International Scientific Conference '50 Years of Traditions and Development of Bulgarian Folklore'*, *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts*, Plovdiv, 2022). The study addresses the role of folk sources and the techniques of their artistic transformation, illustrated through emblematic and uniquely structured vocal works. In the other paper (*Fragments of the Portrait of the Artist Ivan Spasov*, *Collected Papers from the Round Table 'Bulgarian Music in the Second Half of the 20th Century - Creative, Performance, and Educational Traditions and Perspectives'*, *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts*, Plovdiv), the author presents life categories and values derived from Spasov's prose writings, with the aim of tracing the manifestations of existential truths within his artistic output. The material provides an opportunity for this philosophical, aesthetic, and existential dimension of Spasov's personality to reach a wider audience.

It is followed by papers directly related to the teaching practice of Senior Assistant Professor Aliya Hanse, PhD within the Academic Opera Theatre: *The Academic Opera Theatre of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts as a Workshop for Student Ideas and Collaborations* and *The Academic Opera Theatre of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts as an Educational and Creative Environment for Professional Development*. Derived from practical teaching experience, these papers aim to define the role of the Academic Opera Theatre as an interactive educational and artistic-creative environment, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of teamwork as an essential component in students' training and in their development as performing artists on the musical stage. The studies examine methods for motivating young performers, as well as their responsibility toward contemporary culture and

society, while also taking into account certain psychological and emotional factors that shape the overall educational process.

The list of leading artistic achievements not constituting the principal habilitation work includes ten concert appearances by Aliya Hanse with *Evmolpeya* Girls' Choir Formation at the Center for Personal Development Support – Municipal Children's Complex, Plovdiv. As a long-standing conductor of the ensemble, Senior Assistant Professor Hanse has realized numerous international performances in Germany, Serbia, North Macedonia, Slovenia, and Croatia. The ensemble also actively participates in the concert life of Plovdiv and the country, including events such as the *Night of Museums*, the initiative of the Bulgarian Choral Union *Bulgaria Sings*, the choral festival *Let It Be Summer* in Burgas, among others.

Under the indicator 'Citations in Monographs and Peer-Reviewed Collective Volumes', the candidate presents three citations. There is also one review: *The Artistic and Project Activities of the Academic Opera Theatre of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts under the Direction of Senior Assistant Professor Aliya Hanse*, PhD by Associate Professor Eduard Sarafyan, PhD. Participation in three projects, including one international project and two as project leader, as well as the conducted workshops in Izmir, Turkey, and at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts* on interdisciplinary artistic and pedagogical issues in music education, serve as evidence of the candidate's active engagement and her commitment to continuous professional development as a teacher, performer, and organizer. It should also be noted that A. Hanse has participated in administrative work as Secretary of the Department of *Pop and Jazz Performance Art*, as well as in various academic structures and committees at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts*.

Based on all the above, I fully support the candidacy of Senior Assistant Professor Aliya Sahl Hanse, PhD for the academic position of **Associate Professor** in the major *Vocal Ensembles and Academic Opera Theatre*, within Professional Field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, and I wish her success in her continued work as an educator, researcher, and conductor.

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Prof. Vesela Geleva, PhD

Plovdiv