

REVIEW

by

PROF. ZORNITSA DIMITROVA PETROVA, PhD

In connection with the competition for occupying the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 8.3. Music and Dance Arts, major 'Piano', for the needs of the Department of Piano and Accordion at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy

of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Candidate

The sole candidate in the present competition for the academic position of **Associate Professor** in the major '*Piano*' is **Asst. Prof. Georgi Anastasov Slavchev, PhD**. The documents submitted for the procedure are duly prepared and fully comply with all requirements according to:

- *The Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act;*
- *The Regulations for the Implementation of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act;*
- *The Regulations for the Structure and Activity of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts - Plovdiv.*

There is much that can be said - both formally and informally - about the level of the current procedure. Before us stands a musician with a distinguished biography and career trajectory, which I have followed from his earliest school years to the present moment of collegial evaluation. Asst. Prof. Georgi Slavchev, PhD was raised in the artistic environment of the renowned pianists and long-standing professors at the Academy - Dora and Anastas Slavchevi. I

regard this fact as a strong initial impetus for all the positive developments in the candidate's personal, professional, and artistic-creative growth, which today position him as a strong contender for the academic rank - not only through his vivid talent and instrumental mastery, but also through the legacy of a distinguished family tradition. Georgi Slavchev began his studies at the Plovdiv Music School in the class of the esteemed piano pedagogue Yuliya Girginova. From this early period, a considerable number of prizes from national and international competitions also date.

At the age of sixteen, he left for the United States, where he continued his education at the private arts high school *Idyllwild Arts Academy* in California. Four years later, he graduated with highest honours (*summa cum laude*) and received two awards from *Rice University* in Houston, as well as a prize for the most outstanding student across all arts departments. He completed his master's degree at the *Cleveland Institute of Music* under the guidance of the eminent pedagogue and performer Sergei Babayan. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the *University of Southern California* in Los Angeles, specializing in piano performance, piano pedagogy, music history, and electro-acoustic media. For his compositional work, he was awarded First Prize in the National Competition '*New Bulgarian Music in 7/8*'. The body of piano awards he has received from competitions in the USA, Europe, and Bulgaria is extensive.

Georgi Slavchev has also developed a rich discographic portfolio: recordings for radio and television, as well as numerous released compact discs featuring classical, original, popular, and film music. His teaching experience spans prestigious educational institutions in the United States and covers the fields of piano, chamber music, film music, and electronic music. Since 2021, he has been a full-time faculty member at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts*. He was awarded the

Honorary Badge of Plovdiv as the composer of the music for the city's Anthem.

All these remarkable professional achievements are deeply rooted in his pedagogical interactions with figures of the highest pianistic artistry such as Sergei Babayan, Paul Schenly, John Perry, and many others who themselves continue the legacy of the renowned schools of Lev Naumov, Vera Gornostaeva, Victor Babin, and Cecil Genhart.

2. Brief presentation of the submitted materials for review according to the indicators in the scientometric table

The presence of Asst. Prof. Georgi Slavchev, PhD in the cultural sphere of Plovdiv and the country is indisputable and marked by genuine artistic substance. As a leading Bulgarian pianist, he effortlessly compiles the scientometric indicators table, which not only meets but exceeds the minimum statutory requirements.

3. Contributions of the leading creative achievements

Under Group A Indicators, the submitted work is the dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree 'PhD', titled: **'Leopold Godowsky's Fifty-Three Studies on Chopin's Études – Continuation and Evolution of Transcendental Piano Technique: History, Partial Analysis, and Practical Performance Solutions'** (02.04.2005, University of Southern California – Thornton School of Music, degree: Doctor of Musical Arts). Fortunately, this work has been published and is expected to be of substantial benefit in the training of young instrumentalists. The book (**I Indicator**), titled 'Continuation and Evolution of Transcendental Piano Technique in Leopold Godowsky's Fifty-Three Studies on Chopin's Études', is dedicated to his parents, Professors Dora and Anastas Slavchevi, and introduces us to a little-known pianistic laboratory - the world of Leopold Godowsky. Dr. Slavchev

traces the multifaceted contributions of the composer to the development of piano art by presenting the *Études on Chopin's Études*. A detailed analysis of several of the transcriptions is offered, along with practical recommendations for working on them. Authorial variants of pedaling are also presented and examined.

The two publications submitted under **Γ Indicator** may likewise be identified as articles of contributory significance: *On Dvořák and His Piano Works* (Spring Scientific Readings, 2024) and *Who is Leopold Godowsky?* (Yearbook of AMDFA, 2024).

The artistic and creative activity of Georgi Slavchev, presented under **Group B Indicators**, is profoundly impressive. The submitted performances of four piano concertos with orchestra and two solo recitals represent only a small portion of the pianist's extensive and dynamic concert presence. The listed concertos (Maurice Ravel – *Piano Concerto in G major*; Mozart – *Piano Concerto in A major*; Tchaikovsky – *Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor*; Johannes Brahms – *Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor*) are emblematic of the high artistic achievements of the performer and serve as significant milestones in his pianistic mastery and instrumental refinement. When combined with the distinguished names of the conductors and accompanying ensembles, these performances must be regarded as essential and contributory to the musical life of the country. The same applies to the two recitals presented as leading artistic achievements - namely, the recital at the *Sofia Summer Festival* (Bulgaria Chamber Hall, 2001) and the one in Mexico (*Manuel Ponce Hall*, 1997). The wealth of composers, eras, and styles represented in these programs unequivocally highlights the wide-ranging repertoire of the pianist.

Under **Group Γ Indicators (No. 13)**, Dr. Slavchev includes a list of remarkable concert performances which he does not identify as principal

habilitation work. These include: *Concerto in F minor* by J. S. Bach, *Piano Concerto No. 2* by Frédéric Chopin, *Piano Concerto No. 1* by P. I. Tchaikovsky, as well as solo recitals in Houston (USA) and Mainz (Germany). Naturally, to these should be added the prestige of the ensemble performances (**Г-14 Indicator**), which Georgi Slavchev has presented in Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, and the USA. It must be noted that, with regard to chamber music, the pianist follows a long-established and rich family tradition - his parents, the piano duo Dora and Anastas Slavchevi, are leading Bulgarian interpreters who have set high aesthetic standards in this performance genre. For this reason, the chamber performances of Dr. Slavchev naturally align with these family achievements as music-making of a new generation, preserving the values of refined and sincere interpretation.

4. Contributions of the remaining habilitation materials

Following the indicators of the scientometric table, we arrive at the four reviews (**Д-19 Indicator**), which clearly articulate the contributory characteristics of Georgi Slavchev's overall musical presence both in Bulgaria and abroad. Here I will allow myself to cite a passage from my own article *On the Path Toward Humanizing the Performance Space*, published in *Musica viva* in the distant year 2000: 'This concert restored a certain shaken conviction of mine - namely, whether the pianist of the new century will manage to uphold his artistic credo in an age when a powerful virtual machine 'grinds' and 'chews' even the most intimate and sacred spheres of human existence. After the concert, I realized once again that salvation lies in the 'humanization' of the performance space. To be able to share your musical ideas with the silent hall - warmly and unpretentiously, without pose or excessive display. This quality made Georgi Slavchev's music-making profoundly impressive'.

Under **Group E-28 indicators** (Masterclass instruction), Georgi Slavchev demonstrates a close and continuing relationship with his ‘home’ institution, *Dobrin Petkov* National School of Music and Dance, where he delivers annual masterclasses. To these should be added the Masterclass held within the prestigious forum of the Faculty of Music at the Universidad Veracruzana in Xalapa, Mexico.

I would also like to highlight Georgi Slavchev’s successful activity in the fields of classical and applied composition, original music in the sphere of popular genres, his recording work, and the released CDs.

5. Personal Impressions

After everything outlined above, I would also like to share my personal observations as a colleague and as Dean of the Faculty of Musical Pedagogy. Before us stands:

- a versatile musician with notable and successful achievements in various spheres of musical art. Such ‘multigenre’ capacity is a valuable asset not only for any artist, but also for any pedagogue who strives to develop students in step with the times, enriching them here and now through his multifaceted musical skills.
- a pianist with an exceptionally extensive repertoire, which provides him with a natural mentoring advantage and rich opportunities to be useful and valuable in the field of piano pedagogy, to which he is devoted
- the freedom with which he engages in instrumental teaching stems from a wealth of accumulated impressions, acquired mastery, and internalized aesthetic values from two educational systems - the Bulgarian and the American. In their synthesis and mutual

enrichment, I see significant potential for highly beneficial impact in work with piano students.

- the manifestations of high interpretative erudition are combined with unpretentious, open communication with learners. His ‘ability’ does not isolate him - on the contrary, it naturally connects him with the student audience.

In conclusion: I fully share the assessment expressed in Dr. Slavchev’s authorial report that ‘the materials document significant scholarly and artistic-creative contribution’. Regardless of the performance stage - in Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, the USA, or Mexico - the pianist consistently upholds high levels of professional mastery. This fact underscores his artistic contribution to piano performance beyond the borders of the country. Pianist, pedagogue, and creatively driven personality, Georgi Anastasov Slavchev, PhD applies for the announced competition with substantial achievements and proven professional authority. For these reasons, I confidently propose to the esteemed Academic Jury that **he be awarded the academic position of *Associate Professor in the major ‘Piano’***.

November 10, 2025

Plovdiv

Author of the Review:

Prof. Zornitsa Petrova, PhD