

REVIEW

**by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Kozma Kuzmanova
in connection with a competition for the academic position of
PROFESSOR
announced in State Gazette Issue 64 dated 30.07.2024
in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art
major Piano (compulsory instrument)
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 applicant.

The documents submitted for the competition comply with the requirements of 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 and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at AMDFA. **The only candidate for the academic position of Professor in the announced competition is Associate Professor Velislava Angelova Karagenova, PhD, whose documents are complete, properly prepared and meet all requirements.**

Velislava Karagenova graduated with honours from the *Hristina Morfova* School of Music, town of Stara Zagora, Bulgaria and continued his musical studies at the Higher Institute of Musical Pedagogy - Plovdiv, today AMDFA. Since 1996 she has been an assistant, and currently - associate professor of piano at *Prof. Asen Diamandiev* AMDFA. She graduated with a Master's degree in two majors simultaneously - Music Pedagogy in 1992 and Performing Arts - Piano in 1993 in the classes of prof. Georgi Petrov (piano) and prof. Nedyalcho Todorov (chamber music). In 2017 she completed a three-year specialized course in Organ and Chembalo with teacher Stefan Dalchev.

In 2010 she successfully defended his dissertation on 'Peculiarities of metric rhythm in IBERIA Piano Suite by I. Albéniz and their significance for interpretation'. Karagenova's pedagogical activity is particularly active. Many of her piano and piano (compulsory instrument) students are laureates of competitions (Iliyan Tiganev - piano, Aicha Cabuk - chembalo, Guo Rui - chamber music, Velichka Hristeva - First Prize at the 'Viva Piano' 2023 competition) and are actively involved in the concert life of the Academy. In addition to this activity, Karagenova has conducted exercises and lecture courses in the disciplines 'Analysis and Interpretation of Piano Literature', 'Methodology of Piano Teaching', 'Chamber Music' and 'Harpsichord'. As a habilitated lecturer she has realized master classes in piano at *G. Tartini* Conservatory, Trieste, Italy; University of Arts, Iași, Romania. *P. Pipkov* National School of Arts, Pleven, etc.

Outside of teaching, Assoc. Prof. Karagenova has successfully performed as a pianist, chembalo player, organist and chamber music performer in the country and abroad. Her interests are mainly related to chamber music, where she has successfully collaborated with

such names as prof. Nedyalcho Todorov - violin, prof. Magdalena Chikcheva - cello, Prof. Romeo Smilkov - piano, Mariana Panova - soprano and many others, but most actively collaborates with pianist Katya Vasileva and flutist Prof. Borislav Yassenov, PhD. The repertoire with these colleagues is extremely rich and includes all styles and genres.

Particularly noteworthy in the performance activity of her colleague is her predilection for contemporary music and in particular Bulgarian composers - Ivan Spasov, Nikolay Stoykov, Svetoslav Karagenov, Yordan Dafov, etc. She has premiered and recorded a large number of Bulgarian music for Bulgarian National Radio.

V. Karagenova's scientific work includes a large number of articles and five books: 'Albéniz and 'Iberia' through the eyes of the pianist' (2008), 'The Leimer-Giesecking Method', 'Nikolay Stoykov – Six Metamorphoses on Etudes by Cherny and Two Views on Them' (2018, co-authored with S. Karagenov), 'Einojuhani Rautavaara and the Fire Sermon Sonata in Pedagogical and Performance Reading', (2020) and Dmitri Smirnov's Vocal Cycle 'Proverbs of Hell' (2023).

Karagenova is the author and driving force behind creative projects, the latest of which was realized this year and is dedicated to the 90th anniversary of Ivan Spasov. The two concerts and the round table were held with great interest from the professional community and the Plovdiv public.

2. Brief presentation of the materials received for review according to the different indicators of the scientific-metric table.

Group A Indicators

The candidate submits her dissertation 'Features of metric rhythm in Iberia piano suite by Isaac Albéniz and their significance for interpretation' (2010) and Diploma for the award of the academic degree of PhD No 34742 of 04.01.2011.

Group B indicators 5

The following concerts are performed as corresponding in weight to the habilitation work:

1. Concert 'Masterpieces of European Flute Music of the Twentieth Century', within the 59th International Chamber Music Festival Plovdiv, together with Borislav Yassenov.
2. Concert 'Baroque Messages', together with Borislav Yassenov - flute and Yordan Vichev - cello.
3. Recital by Velislava Karagenova /piano/ - G. Tartini, Trieste, Italy.
4. Concert 'French Palette', together with Katya Vasileva - piano, 25.05.2016.
5. Concert 'Piano cycles for four hands', together with Katya Vasileva, 11.05.2015.
6. Concert 'Oh, Spain...', Piano duo Velislava Karagenova and Katya Vasileva and Liliya Ilieva - mezzo-soprano, 02.06.2018.
7. Participation in the concert programme - Concert of the Festival Ensemble - Gabriela Garcia - harp, Giovanni Piscas - clarinet, Mariyana Panova - soprano and Velislava Karagenova - piano within the Days of Chamber Music Gabrovo 2021.

The listed creative performances significantly exceed the required number of points, according to the requirements of the Regulations for the Implementation of the

Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act. Two things are evident from them:

1. Karagenova's recital defends her enduring interest in the interpretation and promotion of works by Bulgarian composers, which is evident from the attached evidence.
2. The remaining concerts (excluding the last one in chronological order) are in collaboration with pianist Katya Vasileva and flautist prof. Borislav Yassenov, with whom, as is evident, Assoc. Prof. Karagenova has been successfully on stage many times. I have been a direct witness to most of the performances listed and can attest to their significance, richness of expression and emotionality.

Group Γ indicators

Under **item 11**, two impressive studies are presented in terms of titles and selection: 'On the vocal cycle 'Proverbs of Hell' by Dmitri Smirnov' and 'Einojuhani Rautavaara and the Fire Sermon Sonata op. 64 - in performance and pedagogical reading'. Remarkably, both studies highlight the affinity of Assoc. Prof. Karagenova's affinity for contemporary music, for discovering new paths not only in scholarly terms but also defended in performance, which I personally find particularly valuable.

Under **item 13** we see a selection of 6 performances, again exceeding the required minimum, with which the colleague again demonstrates consistency in her interests and the creative tandem mainly with prof. Yassenov. The programmes are respectable for their wide range of time and style. In addition to the keyboard skills of Assoc. Prof. Karagenova's playing skills in the programmes 'Little Solemn Mass' by Rossini and 'Rhetoric and Romance' we find her performances on harmonium, harpsichord and organ.

Item 14 includes 10 varied concert programmes, again revealing the performer in various aspects - from solo performances of Bulgarian music on piano and organ, through chamber music with various ensembles and instruments, to her accompanist role in performances with choral ensembles.

Group Δ indicators

This indicator correctly reflects the required number of citations (five) and reviews (15) reflecting Karagenova's work in various aspects.

Group Ε indicators

Item 21 reflects the successful defense of a doctoral dissertation by Guo Rui with a scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Karagenova, **item 22** represents the participation in 2 national projects, **item 24** represents the supervision of 2 national projects, **item 28** represents the 5 master classes held with different audiences and 2 workshops.

3. Contributions of the leading creative performances.

The programmes presented outline a wide range of interests, covering works from baroque music to the present day. Their performance on three different instruments, and in various solo and chamber configurations, paint a portrait of a versatile musician. The performance predilections of Assoc. Prof. Karagenova lie in two main directions - towards Baroque music and towards contemporary Bulgarian and foreign composers.

The first two concerts (in chronological order) are a proof of V. Karagenova - masterpieces of 20th century flute music and baroque music for flute and harpsichord. The vivid differentiation of these two opposing musical styles, protected by the performance of an aesthete and connoisseur of harmony, form and philosophy of the authors, speak of the thorough and thoughtful preparation on the part of the performer and charge the audience emotionally.

Programs devoted to the piano duo are presented by Assoc. Prof. Karagenova in a different light - that of Romanticism. The variety of composers, representing different nationalities, testifies to the sonic diversity and high professionalism of the performance.

In my opinion, the last concert (but not least) held within the framework of the Days of Chamber Music – Gabrovo’21, bears a combination of Karagenova’s main characteristics and contributions to the Bulgarian instrumental and publicist literature. Here we find the premiere performance of ‘Miniatures for voice and piano’ based on poems by W. Blake and music by Dmitri Smirnov. This work provoked the pianist to explore the music and share her interpretive insight in a study of the same name. This program also includes the rarely performed Piano Sonata ‘Fire Sermon’ op. 64 by E. Rautavaara, which is again accompanied by a corresponding study.

4. Contributions of other submitted habilitation materials and citations.

All other materials presented in the reference are respectable in terms of volume, interest, interpretation and pen. Again, I would like to highlight the many premieres presented by Karagenova in an unmistakable manner - the Piano Concerto by G. Monn, Concerto in solo by Wilhelmine von Bayreuth, Rheinberger – ‘Stabat Mater’, Sonata for 2 pianos, Sonata for 4 hands, etc. First performances of works by Bulgarian composers - S. Karagenov - 3 cycles ‘Miniatures’ and ‘Sonata for flute and piano’, Y. Dafov - Capriccio for Flute and Piano, Z. Manolov - Concerto for Cello and Orchestra - Part II.

In the field of chamber ensemble music, Assoc. Prof. Karagenova has realized more than 70 concerts and concert performances with more than 40 different programs for the period 2014-2024 and a significant part of them have been included in leading festivals such as: New Bulgarian Music - Sofia, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2020; International Chamber Music Festival - Plovdiv, 2023, 2024; Days of Music in the Balabanov House - Plovdiv, 2023, etc.

As I have already mentioned, Karagenova is the author of 4 scientific articles and 3 studies, closely related to her performing and pedagogical interests, which have a distinct contribution to Bulgarian musicology and a wide scope of application. This is also due to the author’s not small number (five) of citations. To her scholarly activity we should add her participation in editorial boards of specialized journals; the supervision of a successfully defended PhD student (and another student with an upcoming defense).

I would like to conclude this portrait of sorts with the pedagogical achievements of my colleague in the disciplines she teaches - more than 50 concert performances by students, more than 20 joint performances, 12 prizes from competitions and successfully conducted master classes.

5. Personal impressions.

My personal impressions of Velislava Karagenova date back to our student years at the Music School, followed by the piano class with the same teacher at the AMDFA (Prof. Georgi Petrov) and our long-standing work in the Piano and Accordion Department and our joint creative performances in this period.

All the time V. Karagenova has impressed me with her drive, consistency and sense of responsibility, which have constantly led her forward in search of the new and the better. Her intransigence towards unprincipledness and lack of training in the profession is also impressive. She likes to see her work through to the end in good order, by which I mean professionally and administratively. She does not impose her personality and views, but works consistently, following the path she has mapped out, thus achieving high results and earning the respect of students and colleagues.

As a performer, she is poised, calm, and treats her partners with respect and understanding. Discreetly offers her interpretation and leads to it maturely and supported historically and analytically. She does not conform to imposed clichés, but builds her images and concepts based on depth and breadth of thought. Her interpretations rely on a soft and singing melodic sound and a meaningful distribution of energy.

In her work with students, Assoc. Prof. Karagenova is tolerant, treating them with respect and kindness. She engages consistently and persistently, managing to ignite and motivate them to play and develop. This is evident from the results presented and from the long-standing contacts that the already established colleagues have maintained with her over the years.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of all the received and reviewed materials, my personal impressions and professional assessment, I define the overall activity of Assoc. Prof. Karagenova as multifaceted, professionally defended, correct, building and with a distinctly contributory character.

I propose with full conviction to the esteemed scientific jury to award the academic position of PROFESSOR in the professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, major 'Piano (compulsory instrument)' to Assoc. Prof. Velislava Angelova Karagenova, PhD.

November 15, 2024
Plovdiv

Assoc. Prof. Nadezhda Kuzmanova, PhD