

REVIEW

by

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on

Dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

Professional field (code 8.3) Music and Dance Art,

Doctoral program Choreography

Author: **Marina Semenova Bankova**, doctoral student at the Department of Choreography of

the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography – AMDFA

“Prof Asen Diamandiev”

Title: **The Dance Folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians**

Academic supervisor: Prof Daniela Dzheneva, PhD

General presentation of the procedure and the materials presented for review

This review is prepared on the basis of Order RD-27-108/ 14.07.2023 of the Rector of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv, regarding the approval of a scientific jury and presented by the doctoral candidate a dissertation, an abstract, a report on the contributions of the dissertation, publications on the topic of the dissertation, meeting the requirements of Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), and the Regulations for its implementation, for obtaining educational and scientific degree “doctor” and scientific degree “doctor of sciences”. On the basis of the submitted documents, there is every reason to conclude that the procedure for announcing and conducting the competition was carried out in full compliance with the DASRBA, and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as with the internal Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions in AMDFA.

The candidate Marina Semenova Bankova submitted for review:

- ✓ Dissertation work consisting of 207 pages with the following structure: introduction, exposition in four chapters, conclusion, reference to contributions and bibliography. The use of the standards and the classical structure of this type of exposition are a good sign that the candidate has mastered the basic skills and norms in scientific stylistics. The bibliographic reference includes 59 titles in Cyrillic – both from recent years and titles of some of the first authors on the subject of the dissertation work, 3 internet sources and 48 names of respondents. The discussed elements useful for the study show convincingly the creative handling of the literary sources. The selected interviews and conversations, illustrating the main moments of the dissertation work, are also evidence of knowledge of

the issue. The content of each of the four chapters is separated into paragraphs;

- ✓ Four publications on the topic of the dissertation work in academic journals;
- ✓ An **abstract** of 36 pages, prepared in accordance with the academic requirements, which analytically presents the main moments in the dissertation work and reflects the volume of the dissertation correctly and accurately – both in terms of content and the conclusions and scientific contributions made.

Brief biographical data of the candidate

The biography and professional career of the author of the dissertation work, Marina Semenova Bankova, definitely hints the direction of the researched topic related to the dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians. Born in the village of Kairaklia, Republic of Moldova, after completing her primary education, she continued her studies at the Choreographic Studio for Bulgarian folk dances at the Moldova Philharmonic, based in the "Stefan Neaga" Music and Choreography School in the city of Chisinau. In 1998 she receives Bachelor's degree in Bulgarian Folk Choreography, and in 1999 Master's degree at Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof. Asen Diamandiev". In 2000, she specialized in the topic "Research and recording of the dances and games of the Bessarabian Bulgarians" at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" under the scientific supervision of Prof Daniela Dzheneva. Her training continues in the doctoral program Choreography, as at its meeting on 05.07.2023, the Department of Choreography at the Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" discusses and offers for public defense her dissertation work *The Dance Folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians*. The professional path of the doctoral student Bankova combines executive, pedagogical and artistic activities realized both in Bulgaria and in the Taraclia District of the Republic of Moldova. This allows for a kind of an "inside" view, which makes her research particularly valuable in terms of practical experience and competences accumulated for many years.

Relevance of the topic

The dissertation *The Dance Folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians* is a valuable text in its essence, containing a comprehensive study of the music and dance folklore in places where Bulgarian settlers lived for more than a century away from their original homeland. The relevance of the subject is defined by the fact that for the first time the dance folklore of the Bulgarians from Bessarabia is described and analyzed. In accordance with the dynamic change of the traditional Bulgarian dance, placed in the multicultural environment of the researched region, there is a constant academic need for a comparative analysis and a scientific approach in an attempt to keep and preserve the dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians.

The dissertation quite successfully emphasizes and rationalizes the relevant issues related to the chronology and the development of the dance patterns in the past and today, with the appropriate

emphasis being placed on the dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians before and now. The significance of the dissertation work comes from both the theoretical analysis and the practical experience of the doctoral student, who knows very well the specifics of the traditional Bulgarian dance in preserving the ethnic self-awareness of the Bulgarians in a multicultural environment.

Expediency of the research methods used to achieve the set goals

Bankova defines the objective of her dissertation as presenting "*...the music-dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians through a thorough study of the dance patterns: to describe and clarify the characteristic features of the folk dances of the Bulgarians, living for a long time far from their ancestral homeland in a multicultural environment; to study and systematize the dance folklore of the Bulgarians from Bessarabia; to describe, compare and analyze the complete dance folklore related to the studied locations: the town of Taraclia, the village of Kairaklia, the town of Tvarditsa and the village of Korten*" /p.9/. This objective sets the specific research tasks, six in number, which are implemented sequentially in the main text. In relation to the research goals and tasks, appropriate methods and tools are applied: observation, interview, comparative analysis, classification and summary, and the doctoral student shows the ability to present her ideas in an analytical form.

Evaluation of the dissertation work

In the **Introduction**, the doctoral candidate Marina Semenova Bankova substantiates the importance of the problem and outlines the direction of the research, its goals, tasks and methodology. Although not quite precisely formulated, the text defines the object and subject of the research, as well as the author's thesis that the dances of the Bessarabian Bulgarians in Moldova have differences from the dances of the Bulgarians in today's Bulgaria, but their preservation and conservation is necessary for maintaining the ethnic self-awareness in a multicultural environment. The changes in the traditional Bulgarian dance related to the existential experiences of the Bulgarian immigrants in historical terms are characterized. The lack of in-depth scientific studies of this process related to traditional dance folklore provoked the doctoral student to delve deeper into this serious topic.

The **first chapter** offers a serious review of the literature on the topic of the dissertation work. The works of both Bulgarian and Russian authors were examined in the context of the present study. A special attention is paid to the contribution of Prof Raina Katsarova, whose field research includes the dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians. The author takes the points of view presented in the works of a large number of scientists as a serious foundation that enables a thorough understanding of the folklore tradition in the studied region. A thorough reading of theoretical studies leads to the conclusion that "*The authors generally pay attention to the preserved old Bulgarian layer, starting from the concept of the diaspora as a reserve for cultural relics. Less attention is paid to the interactions and influences that the Bulgarians from the studied region experience from the peoples and communities surrounding them.*" /p.19/ The achieved scientific results shape the views of the

doctoral student and support and help her analyses in the direction of "... what the Bulgarians in Bessarabia keep and what they change in terms of their dance folklore"/p.19/.

In the **second chapter**, the conceptual emphasis on presenting the geographical location and historical information about the studied region. The focus is on certain historical moments that give a general idea of the appearance and development of the settlements in this region. The doctoral student traces the emergence and development of the Bulgarian diaspora, starting from the large region of Bessarabia, located on the territory of two countries – Moldova and Ukraine. The historical review continues with a presentation of the Bessarabian Bulgarians in the Taraclia region of the Republic of Moldova and ends with the analysis of specific settlements from this region. The ethnic composition of the town of Taraclia, the village of Kairaklia, the town of Tvarditsa and the village of Korten, with a predominantly Bulgarian population, is precisely presented. It is indicated from which parts of Bulgaria the new settlers came, which is essential in the subsequent analyses of the dance folklore.

The **third chapter** *Description and analysis of the dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians* is particularly important and essential part of the study. Consistently and logically justified, Bankova directs the focus of her attention on examples of the dance folklore of the Bulgarians in southern Moldova, systematized on the one hand according to the investigated settlements - the town of Taraclia, the village of Kairaklia, the town of Tvarditsa, the village of Korten, and on the other, as "*an integrating and differentiating mark for the local Bulgarian population*" in all the settlements of southern Moldova and all of Bessarabia. The detailed analysis, with musical material included, of the ring-dances and the performances found in the four Bulgarian settlements in Moldova, as well as in the whole of southern Bessarabia, finding place in the local festivities and celebrations, brings out the conclusion that: "*The repertoire of the festivities with dance practices of each village is shaped depending on the geographical location of the settlements, the time of settlement and the influence of other nationalities living around*".

The exposition continues with an overview of the studies of the researchers Georgi Yankov, Prof Raina Katsarova and Galin Georgiev. A special place is given to the records of Prof Raina Katsarova from an expedition carried out in 1958 and not yet published to this day. In the context of her research, the doctoral student defines "...*this archival material is a real finding*" /p.121/. In view of the precise structuring of the dissertation work, I believe that this paragraph should be in the first chapter. Thus, quite logically, the first two paragraphs will lead to the conclusions made in the next paragraph, in which, summarizing the analyses made, the author draws the conclusion that the style of dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians, as well as the specific repertoire performed on different occasions, has its own identity, combining both characteristics brought from the ancestral homeland and influenced by other cultures.

Chapter four draws attention to the importance of the traditional dance and the various stages of its development in the customs, socio-cultural life, musical accompaniment and its role in the development of the dance folklore, as well as the contemporary state of dance practices. In her

analysis, Bankova provides arguments and substantiates the existence of the original traditional dance, as well as the specific factors that influenced its development in a certain period of time. I consider the personal experience of the doctoral candidate in teaching Bulgarian Folk Dances at the Model Centre for Art Education "Stefan Neaga", Tvarditsa branch, to be a particularly valuable contribution. Her efforts to make the students comprehend the immensity of the Bulgarian folklore, which is part of their origin, is admirable, and at the same time in proving that "...*finding and presenting the Bessarabian folklore with a professional approach gives confidence in the uniqueness of the ethnic group to which they belong*" /p.184/. In the last paragraph of this chapter, the author summarizes all the factors that influence the preservation and development of the music and dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians.

In the **conclusion**, as a natural ending of the study, the candidate summarizes the most essential content regarding the dance folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians and concludes that "*the Bulgarians in Bessarabian Moldova, living among different cultures, use the dance to express their distinctiveness among other communities and to preserve their identity in order to conserve and pass on their uniqueness away from their homeland Bulgaria.*" /p. 202/.

Contributions and significance of the thesis and the relevant publications

This valuable dissertation work is impressive with the amount and the quality of the studies carried out, the accumulation of important research material and the in-depth analysis. For the first time, the dance folklore of the Bulgarians from Bessarabia is described and analyzed. I fully accept the mentioned and analytically presented six contributions of the work. It has serious scientific value and meets the requirements of the DASRBA and the regulations for its implementation.

The doctoral student has indicated four publications on the topic of the dissertation. The publications made in terms of number and content fully meet the requirements for admission to thesis defense.

I **recommend** that the text be restructured, with introduction of specific conclusions after each paragraph and then published as a practical manual intended not only for specialists, but also for anybody who is interested in the folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians.

Conclusion

In view of everything mentioned above, I hereby give my positive assessment of the dissertation *The Dance Folklore of the Bessarabian Bulgarians*, and propose to the respected scientific jury that Marina Semenova Bankova be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Professional Direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Choreography.

29 Sept 2023

Varna

Reviewer:

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