

REVIEW

by Prof Daniela Kirilova Dzheneva, PhD

on dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”

Professional field (code 8.3) Music and Dance Art

Doctoral program “Choreography”

Author: Martin Stoyanov Petkov

Title: *The Wedding Ring Dance – Specific dance practices and rituals from the region of Sliven*

Academic supervisor: Prof Anton Andonov

1. General presentation of the procedure and the materials presented for review

The author of the dissertation is Martin Stoyanov Petkov – full-time doctoral student at the Department of Choreography at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv with academic supervisor Prof. Anton Andonov. The materials presented by him in the procedure meet the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and the Regulations for its implementation for the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions in AMDFA. They contain the necessary orders, dissertation work, abstract, list of author's publications - 3 in number, a creative autobiography and a report on the contributions of the dissertation.

2. Brief biographical data of the candidate

Martin Petkov is born in 1990 in the city of Sliven, where in 2009 he graduated from the Konstantin Konstantinov Secondary School with major in Bulgarian folk dances. His first dance performances are associated with the school's ensemble dance Aglika. In 2009, he was admitted to AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv in specialty Bulgarian Folk Choreography. In 2013, he obtained Bachelor degree, and in 2014 he completed two Master's degrees - Choreographic Directing and Art Management. In the period 2010 - 2015, he was a dancer in the Dance Team of AMDFA and dance formation Ethno Rhythm - Plovdiv. At the same time, he is the leader of amateur teams, incl. and children's ensemble "Sedenchitsa" - Plovdiv, "Ethno Dance" - village of Zvanichevo, etc. In 2016, he started working as an organizer of concert activities in ensemble "Sliven", then in the same year he also worked in the ensemble "Zagore" - Stara Zagora as a ballet master. He was also a choreographer at ensemble for folk songs and dances "Zornitsa" - Stara Zagora. From September 2017 until today, he is a performer in the ensemble "Trakiya" - Plovdiv. He is the head of the club for Bulgarian folk dance "Gaitani" - Plovdiv.

3. Relevance of the topic

The topic of the dissertation is relevant due to the fact that today we have undeniably moved away from the patriarchal way of life of Bulgarians, and any study that analyzes and acquaints us with the irretrievably lost roots of our way of life is essential for the modern Bulgarian society. The

doctoral student studies characteristic dances and games from pre-wedding and wedding dance practices and their place in the big picture of family rites from the Sliven region. It is also relevant in that the described ethnographic, dance and musical materials are a good basis for creating new stage works based on real folklore - a circumstance that can fill at least a small part of the need for themes in contemporary art.

4. Expediency of the research methods used to achieve the set goals

The methods used are field research, work with archival documents, audio and video recordings, as well as analysis and systematization of the information acquired with empirical approaches. The doctoral student has clearly formulated that his goal is, through the listed methods and through the implementation of 5 specific tasks, to achieve a high scientific value for the current work, which will lead to "*preservation and popularization of source samples, or in other words - preservation of the intangible cultural heritage of Bulgaria and in particular the Sliven region*".

5. Evaluation of the dissertation

Martin Petkov's dissertation is 189 pages. It is structured in introduction, five chapters and conclusion (they are not separated), a list of 23 informants and photographic material are attached - a total of 41 photographs. The bibliography used includes 96 titles by Bulgarian authors – ethnographers, choreographers, local historians and others.

In the introduction, the author presents his personal motivation to write a work with the title *The Wedding Ring Dance – Specific dance practices and rituals from the region of Sliven*. He argues the relevance of the topic with the lack of research of a similar scope on the dance practices inherent in the wedding custom from the studied region. The basic goal in the present study is formulated similarly, and for its achievement, 4 specific and clearly defined tasks have been identified, the solving of which predetermines the achievement of certain contributions.

Chapter one is an overview of the scientific research on the topic of the dissertation to date. It is noteworthy that Martin Petkov is not only familiar with the titles, but briefly analyzes the contributions of each of the listed books. He cited works by Dimitar Marinov, Mikhail Arnaudov, Stoyan Dzhudzhev, Hristo Vakarelski, Raina Katsarova, Radost Ivanova, Kiril Dzhenev and Kiril Haralampiev, Krasimir Petrov, Anna Ilieva, Anton Andonov, Toncho Konduzov, Simeon Tabakov. He mentions with gratitude a number of authors who have published their field studies from the Sliven region. In conclusion, the doctoral student summarizes that the description of dances and games related to the Wedding is almost absent, which gives rise to the need for scientific research on the specific topic.

In the second chapter, he examines the social rules and beliefs related to the Wedding from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Referring to the informants and authors of previous studies, the author analyzes the complex social relations in the patriarchal society. He explores approaches to "*getting the young together*" and the different motivations for doing so,

emphasizing that unfortunately it is often outside of their feelings and preferences. Even here he reveals part of the complex symbolism in the pre-wedding and wedding rites.

The third chapter is entitled Pre-Wedding Rituals and is devoted to all the actions and processes preceding the actual wedding. At the moment when the boy's parents have chosen his life partner, the rapprochement of the two families begins with "*matchmaking*" and "*small betrothal*". The second step is "*big betrothal*" and "*talks*", with the author taking a very creative approach to the research by literally quoting some curious and emotional stories from the informants. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to the time when the girl and the boy are engaged and preparing for the actual "Wedding". The conclusion here is that in the Sliven region, after the "Official Engagement", the girl is taken home by the boy's parents to their home, where certain canons and ritual actions preceding the wedding itself are observed.

The fourth chapter is the most voluminous, in which the doctoral student introduces us to the actual wedding rites. He systematizes them as preparatory actions: "inviting", "making the flag", "wedding breads", "dowry", "honey bread" and "sifting". Next comes the actual wedding: "shaving of the groom", "veiling", "wedding", "welcoming" to the groom's home, "wedding table", "unveiling", "sending off the best men", "the first wedding night", "sweet brandy". The doctoral student concludes that the dance part may be absent in some places, but the songs and playing are bright and characteristic, and in other instances good sense and great endurance are required from the dancers. The sequential exposition of the ritual actions abounds with colorful examples, some of which also describe inherent "dialogues" between the characters in the wedding.

The last fifth chapter is devoted to the rites that take place after the Wedding. Starting early in the morning on Monday, when the bride "pours water" for the father-in-law and the mother-in-law to wash, and a number of ritual actions follow, which are an indisputable axiom for the young and for the family. All of them are related to beliefs and practices that take place on a certain day and time of the week. The after-wedding rituals end with "*returns*" when the young bride is accompanied to visit her parents for the first time. Finally, the author summarizes: "*After every 'end', there is always a 'new beginning'.*" *The newlyweds are now officially part of the social group of the "married" and as such, in addition to the rights of the adult family members, they must also share their responsibilities*".

6. Contributions and significance of the thesis and the relevant publications

In general, I would summarize that Martin Petkov knows the problems and has approached analytically and constructively in presenting his thesis. The contributions defined by him clearly and accurately reflect the results of the dissertation in two directions – in scientific and in practical. The publications attached to the materials are specific to the main topic and are realized in front of a diverse audience in three universities - AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, University of Library Science and Information Technologies - Sofia and Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar" - Varna.

7. Critical remarks and recommendations

I recommend the doctoral student to publish this dissertation in a book, because it is filled with interesting and unique factual information about ritual dances, games and practices in the Wedding from the Sliven region. It is necessary to rethink and rework the photographic material presented as appendix in order to have a purposeful meaning from each photograph, including the captions for information.

8. Abstract:

The presented Abstract introduces us briefly to the main chapters, conclusions and contributions of the dissertation. It is 36 pages and in a synthesized form it informs us about the content and the motivation for writing it. It is prepared in compliance with the requirements of the relevant rules and regulations.

9. Conclusion:

Considering the above, I am convinced that I give my positive assessment of the conducted research, represented by a dissertation, an abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honourable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Martin Stoyanov Petkov in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Choreography.

27.09.2024

Reviewer:.....

/Prof D. Dzheneva, PhD/