

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof Dimo Enev Enev – AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev"-Plovdiv

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

professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Choreography,

scientific specialty Choreography, Department of Choreography,

Faculty of Music Folklore and Choreography at

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts “Prof Asen Diamandiev”, Plovdiv

Author: Martin Stoyanov Petkov

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

Academic supervisor: Prof Anton Andovov

The doctoral candidate Martin Stoyanov Petkov has presented a set of electronic and paper documents related to the procedure for defending the dissertation work, as well as 3 publications related to the main topic of the scientific research. All of them comply with the regulations for the development of the academic staff and the scientific activity of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv and therefore I have no objections to the presented documents and materials.

Martin Stoyanov Petkov was born in 1990 in Sliven, where in 2009 graduated from secondary school "Konstantin Konstantinov" with profile Bulgarian Folk Dances. In the period 2009-2013 he studied at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, where he obtained a Bachelor's degree in Bulgarian Folk Choreography. In 2014 he defends his Master's degree in the same majors Bulgarian Folk Choreography and Art Management. In the period between 2010 – 2015, in addition to performer in the Dance Team of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv and dance formation Ethno Rhythm, he also works as a leader in a number of amateur and children's ensembles such as: Ensemble "Sedenchitsa" - Plovdiv, "Ethno Dance" - village Zvanichevo and others.

In 2016 he works as an organizer of concerts of Ensemble for Folk Songs and Dances Sliven, and then at the end of the same year he starts working as a ballet master at Folklore Ensemble "Zagore", Stara Zagora. In Stara Zagora he also works as a choreographer at Ensemble for Folk Songs and Dances "Zornitsa", Stara Zagora. From September 2017 until now, he has been working as dancer in Folklore Ensemble "Trakia" - Plovdiv. Since February 2020, he is also part of the collective of the Bulgarian dance club "Gaitani", as a leader.

The problems discussed in the scientific work *The Wedding Ring Dance* – **Specific dance practices and rituals from the region of Sliven** directs our attention to an extensive topic summarizing wedding traditions from the Sliven region. The ancestral and emotional attachment of the doctoral student to this ethnographic region of Bulgaria complements his professional knowledge and pursuits.

The dissertation work of Martin Petkov is structured correctly according to the regulations for scientific writing in AMDFA. It consists of 189 pages, including an introduction, three main chapters and a conclusion with contributing points. The work is supplemented with an appendix of photographic material, a named list of the informants from the various settlements, as well as a bibliography of 96 book titles, which adequately complement the work and build it in a research and applied plan.

Already in the introductory part, the author clarifies his motivational orientation and, without going into detail, he directs us to the wedding custom from the Sliven region with its "...*pre-wedding, actual wedding and after-wedding*..." rituals, page 3. Even here he marks the participation and importance of dance in particular the ring-dances and the games in the customs of the individual settlements. All this sums up the need for further studies and research on the subject.

Formulating the goals, tasks and methods of the research, the doctoral student defines his aspiration for "...*preservation and popularization of source samples, or in other words - preservation of the intangible cultural heritage of Bulgaria, and in particular of the Sliven region*..." page 7

In Chapter I. An overview of scientific research on the subject gives the impression that Martin Petkov has acquired significant theoretical knowledge on the subject. Going through the various levels of research on the region and the custom, the author complements the need for new descriptions and analyses.

II Chapter. Social rules and beliefs related to the wedding

In this chapter, the doctoral student focuses on the unwritten activities that are in complete union with the family-ritual system, emphasizing the individual prerequisites for reaching the wedding. In the first place, it places the social status and presence in society, goes through work qualities and wealth, age and opportunities for initiation (gatherings, collective work and festive dances), the given word and reaches arranged marriages. Compares the activities in the villages in the mountain and the valley, giving examples and summarizing them.

In the main part of the work, structured by the author in chapters III, IV and V, the pre-wedding ritual activities of the various settlements are described and analyzed in detail. The presented pre-wedding rites - "*matchmaking*", "*small betrothal*", "*big betrothal*" and "*talks*" p. 42 are deciphered according to their ethnographic characteristics, but the author's quest for their fullest presentation does not reach its peak effect due to the fact that no mention is made of the presence or absence of song and dance practices in this part of the custom.

In chapter IV Actual wedding rituals, the author traces the sequence, as well as the "preparatory" ritual actions - "*Inviting*", "*Making the flag*", "*Preparing the wedding breads*", "*Taking the dowry*", "*Ring bread*"-"*Honey bread*" and "*Sifting*" as well as the "*Actual Wedding*" including the rituals of "*Shaving the Groom*", "*Veiling*", "*Bringing Out*", "*Wedding*", "*Welcoming*" to the groom's home, "*Wedding Table*", "*Unveiling*", "*Sending off the best men*", "*The First Wedding Night*", "*Sweet Brandy*". By adding "**After-wedding ritual practices**" from chapter V "*Inviting the bride*" and

"Povrunki" (exchange of visits) the author closes the entire ritual cycle of the wedding custom from the Sliven region. The description of the individual ritual actions is extremely detailed with comparisons, both with other theoretical works and with the field studies of the doctoral student from different settlements. The symbolism of the individual rituals and requisites was searched and found, and the etymological features of the individual names were also revealed. This gives the work applied and scientific value in an ethnographic aspect. The described music-song and dance examples are adequately woven into the scientific paper, but their quantitative number does not correspond to the rich wedding rituals of the Sliven region. The few dances and games that are represented lack their utilitarian, symbolic, musical and ritual character.

The concluding part is based on the main specifics affecting the essence of the dissertation work. The division made with ethnographic and choreographic focus further enriches the general content and gives a practical-applied completeness to the work. In addition to the presented traditional rites, the author also gives importance to modern times with the words "*...Even though nowadays the tradition is much different and the meaning of most of the actions, in every single custom, have lost their original intention, they are still with us reached enough information to be able to describe them in the way they lived in the past and in the deep meaning that was once invested in them...*" p. 158

The significance of the research is also manifested through a contribution to the expansion of knowledge in the specific direction and impresses with its completeness and comprehensiveness.

The **contributions** of the work, six in number, correspond adequately with the exploratory-analytical realizations made and complement the overall structure of the dissertation, as the author weaves them purposefully and in detail into its individual directions.

The articles and reports written by the candidate are correctly referenced, showing various stages of his research work.

The 36-page **abstract** is based on the dissertation and follows its sequence and content.

In conclusion, I express my positive assessment of the scientific work titled *The Wedding Ring Dance – Specific dance practices and rituals from the region of Sliven* of the doctoral student and with the recommendation that before its publication it be supplemented with dance and music-song examples, I strongly recommend the Scientific Jury to award Martin Stoyanov Petkov the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", professional field 8.3 , Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Choreography.

