

REVIEW

by

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of a dissertation for the award of an educational and scientific degree "doctor"
Professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Choreography

Author: **Riolina Petkova Topalova,**

doctoral student at the department: Choreography, Faculty of Musical Folklore and Choreography of
Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev"

Topic: *Development of modern dance in America and Europe.*

Comparative analysis of the established techniques

Academic supervisor: Prof Daniela Dzheneva, PhD

1. General presentation of the procedure and the presented materials

This review is prepared on the grounds of Order RD-27-082/ 24.06.2024 of the Rector of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv. As a member of the scientific jury, I have received and reviewed the candidate's materials in detail. The documents submitted by the doctoral student: Order No RD-27-045 of 1.07.2016 for enrollment and Order No. RD-27-071 of 04.11.2019 for discharge, and the attached materials: dissertation, abstract, report on contributions in the dissertation work, publications on the topic of the study are in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulation for its implementation, for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor". Duly fulfilled requirements enable me to objectively and fully assess the candidate.

2. Brief biographical data of the candidate

The presented creative biography of Riolina Petkova Topalova provides information about her professional growth and achievements, which are closely related to the art of dance. In 1987, she completed her secondary education at the Sofia State Choreography School under the tuition of the teachers Romyana Atanasova and Assoc. Prof Biser Deyanov, which was the starting point for her creative development. Proof of this is the twenty years of professional growth in the Sofia Opera and Ballet, where according to the presented documentation she has played many leading roles in ballets such as: *The Sleeping Beauty, Don Quixote, The Nutcracker, Romeo and Juliet, The Lady of the Camellias*, etc.

She continued her higher education at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, as in 2004 she completed a Master's program in Ballet Art - Ballet Pedagogy, and in 2008 she received another Master's degree in Ballet Directing. The training and professional work under the guidance of the distinguished pedagogues in ballet art Prof Petar Lukanov, Prof Irina Trofimova, Prof Nataliya Tarasova, Prof Liliana Draguleva, Assoc. Prof Biser Deyanov and Marina

Abdulaeva outlines the direction in the scientific interests and professional development of the doctoral student. From 2006 to 2022 she is a coordinator, assistant director, tutor, choreographer and ballet teacher at Sofia Opera and Ballet. Choreographer and director of performances, concert programs and dance projects such as: *The Magic Flute*, premiere 14.03.2024, *The Sound of Music*, premiere 01.09.2024, *Fairy Legends* 26.11.2022, *The Woman from the Lake*, premiere 07/09/2021, *My Father the Painter*, premiere - 08.05.2021, *Shrek* premiere 14.02.2020, *Don Pasquale*, premiere - 12.01.2019, *Mamma Mia* premiere - 18.07.2018 *Yana's Nine Brothers* - 22.03.2018, International production of Teatro Lirico Giuseppe Verdi in Trieste /Italy/ 7-9.10.2017 **Eugene Onegin** - premiere 08.04.2017, *Nabucco* - premiere - 23.07.2016, *Tristan and Isolde* - premiere 26.02.2015 *La Traviata* - premiere - 28.11.2013 *La fille mal gardée* - premiere 26.04.2014 *Rhapsody in Blue*, premiere 07.06.2012., *The Sleeping Beauty*, premiere 11.12.2011, *Cinderella* premiere 24.09.2008. She works especially successfully with the Broadway director West Hyler in the realization of the musicals *Shrek* and *The Sound of Music*.

In addition to performing, she also works as a teacher.

In the period of 2011 until now she is a teacher-lecturer at AMDFA-Plovdiv. Since 2012 she is the head of the methodical association Classical Dance and a teacher at the National School of Dance Art in the following disciplines: **Classical Dance, Theory and Methodology, Repertoire, Teaching Practice, History of Dance, Composition and Improvisation, Acting, Historical Dances**, which have inspired the candidate for scientific searches.

Since 2016 to date, Riolina Topalova leads master classes at Art Garage - Center for Choreography and Modern Performing Arts in Pozzuoli - Naples /Italy/. She has a long experience as a choreographer, such as in 2019 and 2021 she works together with the Encho Keryazov Foundation for "Night of the Stars". The entire professional path of the doctoral student is directly related to the developed topic of the dissertation work, which is also the contribution to the relevance of scientific research.

3. General characteristics, assessment and relevance of the dissertation work

The presented dissertation: *Development of Modern Dance in America and Europe. A Comparative Analysis of the Established Techniques*, is of interest. The work is a total of 175 pages, of which 171 are the main text. It consists of five chapters, which include introduction and conclusion, contributions, publications on the topic of the dissertation. The content of each chapter is divided into separate paragraphs, with conclusions drawn at the end of each chapter. The main text contains numerous citations as evidentiary material for the text of the dissertation, which gives the impression of a good knowledge of the literary sources regarding the topic of the study. The bibliography includes 45 titles.

In view of the insufficient availability of necessary literature on the topic in Bulgarian, this scientific research presents a strong motivation in the doctoral student to present and continue the

studies in this direction. Thus formulated the topic of the dissertation work and the key component "*transformations of the dance art today*" are relevant and interesting for choreographers, educators, dancers and researchers in the field of dance art.

The clearly defined task "*to study more materials from different sources, to compare, analyze and summarize*", which through the use of the presented methods: descriptive, analytical and comparative-analytical, contribute to a thorough study and reaching in-depth conclusions.

Already in the **Introduction**, the goals and the way to achieve them are set, namely: the detailed examination of modern dance as multi-genre and aesthetically multi-faceted in all choreographic directions born in the 20th century from its inception until today. *Its technical developments and methodological justifications, necessary for the construction of universal Bulgarian dance artists and performers.* Of course, a very important point in achieving the set goals is the study of history and archival materials that have been used and provide an opportunity to apply comparative analysis.

As proof of the above is the **first chapter** of the dissertation work of Riolina Topalova, in which an *Overview of the research on the subject* is presented. The theoretical developments of distinguished researchers and analysts who managed to catch *a thread from the complex network of modern dance and reach information about certain artists who gave their philosophy and aesthetics to the moving body* are examined. They are the starting point for the author's analysis of the findings and conclusions. The extensive knowledge of the scientific literature as a starting point in the research is impressive.

In the second chapter, **Main stages of the emergence of modern dance** in chronological order, the doctoral student examines the birth and development of the modern dance with the main aesthetic characteristics and self-expression as a basis in the construction of modern dance technique. The maximum expertise achieved during the research and the in-depth consideration of the historical specifics of modern dance, related to the subject of the research, give Topalova the opportunity for conclusions and findings, which are also a logical transition to the next chapter.

Comparative analysis of the established techniques - is the third chapter of the scientific study and more precisely in III. 1. *The origin of jazz in music-dance folklore* and III.2 *Jazz dance* attention is paid to the emergence and development of the jazz dance, the construction of the various styles of modern jazz dance. In *Modern trends in the development of the modern jazz dance and its various directions. Basic concepts in the technique of jazz dance*, as well as in paragraph III.4, III.5 and III.6 the doctoral student successfully achieves her goals in theoretical issues to achieve applied results. The specific features are examined in detail in *Somatic Techniques and Methods*, giving information for the first time about the main techniques used in modern dance, and the most valuable are those in the targeted direction, which are very difficult to discover and analyze due to the lack of sufficient materials.

Chapter four - **Terminology used in modern dance techniques**, in this chapter of the scientific work the main movements used in modern dance are examined, analyzing their essence with the aim of their methodical and technical mastery. With the practical-applied orientation, the transformations of the rendered forms and the impact of the capabilities of the human body are studied. Following the analytical formula in this dissertation using an applied methodology, the author shares: *The modern techniques interact with each other. With the development of the art of dance, they are layered and superimposed on the basis of the different directions, driven by the dynamics of movement, by emotional content, by self-expression, freedom and liberation from physical restraints. Regardless of the technique, the uniform terminology is used despite the different principles of body movement.*

4. Contributions and significance of the thesis and the publications on the subject of the dissertation

Analyzing the presented work in terms of its content and structural scope, it can be concluded that it has a significant contribution to the survey of contemporary dance, which is characterized by a research orientation due to the interaction of dance with the ever-evolving philosophy of movement and the possibility of a practical body of knowledge. The **contributions** presented by the author in **Chapter V** are analytically presented and credible. They are brought out in four points, which I accept and admire.

The presented **3 publications and reports on the topic** *Improvisation in modern dance - help or hindrance for professional dancers, Rudolph von Laban - founder of German free expressive dance and creator of dance notation and Modern dance icon Martha Graham. Creator of the main dance technique of the 20th century* reflect major research highlights in the scientific study, as well as the rich practical and research experience of Riolina Topalova in the field of contemporary dance.

The abstract is prepared according to the requirements and standards. It provides information on all parts of the dissertation with the relevant conclusions drawn.

5. Remarks and recommendations.

After the excellent presentation of the dissertation work, I strongly hope that Riolina Topalova will continue her scientific research and develop the dance literature with many of her works, which I am convinced would find practical implementation in educational institutions in the field of dance.

6. Conclusion

Riolina Topalova shows a high status in scientific research and is a bright representative of the dance art. The awards presented by her are also indisputable: In 2017 Winner of the Golden Lira Award of the Union of Bulgarian Music and Dance Artists for high artistic-creative and pedagogical achievements, and in 2023 she was awarded the Golden Lyre Special Award and a Ballet Teacher

Plaque of the Union of Bulgarian Music and Dance Artists, which distinguishes her as a well-established professional.

I congratulate the doctoral student and her supervisor **Prof Daniela Dzheneva** for the high results achieved. The dissertation under consideration has a scientific-practical value and meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations for its application. I confidently give my **positive assessment** of the conducted research, *Development of modern dance in America and Europe. Comparative analysis of the established techniques* and I propose to the respected scientific jury to award Riolina Petkova Topalova the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in Professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, "Choreography".

29.08.2024

Reviewer:

Assoc.Prof Roslana Moravenova-Staneva