

**ACADEMY OF MUSIC, DANCE AND FINE ARTS**  
**"PROF ASEN DIAMANDIEV" – PLOVDIV**

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**OPINION**

by Assoc. Prof Elitsa Petrova Lukanova, PhD

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts  
"Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv  
of a dissertation for the award of an educational and scientific degree "doctor"  
Professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Music

Author: **Riolina Petkova Topalova,**

doctoral student at the department: "Choreography", faculty "Musical Folklore and Choreography" of  
the AMDFA "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 materials presented for review**

This opinion 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, regarding the approval of a scientific jury and presented by the doctoral candidate: enrolment order, discharge order, dissertation, abstract, curriculum vitae, contributions and three author publications on the topic.

The dissertation is 175 pages. It consists of five chapters, including an introduction, conclusion, contributions, publications on the topic of the dissertation (3) and a bibliography of used sources (45 thematic units).

**2. Brief biographical data of the candidate**

The biographical reference of Riolina Topalova presents us chronologically the development of her personality in the field of dance art in several directions – education, pedagogical activity, achievements (two personal awards and eleven awards as a teacher and artistic director from national and international dance forums).

Her artistic and creative work is extensive. Twenty-six works are presented, in which she is part of the creative team, which includes established names in music and dance art, Riolina Topalova participates as a choreographer/director/producer in the implementation of the performances. I am a direct witness and participant in the entire professional career of the doctoral student: from her admission to the State Choreographic School/ now National School of Dance NSD/, then at the Sofia Opera and Ballet - at first as an artist-ballerina, then: assistant director, ballet inspector, choreographer, teacher at AMDFA - Plovdiv and NSD - Sofia and artistic director of the "Classical Dance"

department at NSD. In the period of 2011 until now, as a teacher-lecturer at AMDFA-Plovdiv, she has trained and inspired more than 80 students, most of whom now have Master's degree in Ballet Pedagogy and Ballet Directing. The entire professional path of Riolina Topalova proves her interest in the developed topic of the dissertation work.

### **3. Relevance of the topic**

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.

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

The introduction clearly defines the **objective** (*to trace the historical creation of the modern dance from its inception, through its affirmation, development and promotion... the modern dance in America and Europe, in the twentieth century*) and the **tasks** of the dissertation work (*to explore more materials from different sources; - to compare, analyze and summarize; - to outline the creative path, in more detail, of significant personalities in the history and development of modern dance; - to give a precise definition of the terminology of the moves used in the modern techniques*). The described qualitative research methods are the right choice to achieve the set objective and tasks (*comparative analysis of established dance techniques based on different forms, directions and styles and their terminology*). The doctoral student has built a structure that clearly reflects and defends the author's thesis that "*...discovering and studying more and more materials about the history and development of modern dance and its diverse directions, as well as all established modern dance techniques, and somatic techniques, will contribute to the richer knowledge in the professional training of pupils and students, as future performers, teachers and choreographers, dedicated to modern dance art*".

### **5. Evaluation of the dissertation work.**

It is no coincidence that in **chapter one**, the author presents an **Overview of the research on the subject**, thus proving the lack and need for awareness of the history of modern dance, its stylistic characteristics, and its philosophy of self-discovery and mastery.

**Chapter two: Main stages of the emergence of modern dance.** The exposition in this part is full of rich information about the firsts in modern dance in chronological order from America to Europe. Before that, Riolina Topalova presents the main aesthetic characteristics and self-expression,

as a basis in the construction of modern dance technique. It presents the brightest representatives – innovators, choreographers, dancers, theorists and researchers and their contribution to the development of modern dance. The first dance schools and trends are identified, and the different approaches in the construction and structuring of the choreographies are also presented.

The second chapter is, in a way, divided into two parts, the second starting from **II.4. Development of modern dance in the twentieth century. Intergenerational connection and continuity**. After that, the author introduces us to *Postmodernism, Musical, Dance Theater and Expressionism* with its representatives (successors of the "first"). The first dance schools are introduced.

Several generations of modernists are examined, creating new performance techniques and teaching methods on the basis of which modern dance techniques are shaped.

The conclusions drawn are a logical transition to the next **chapter three: Comparative analysis of the established techniques**. As in the previous part of the work in paragraphs *III.1* and *III.2* attention is paid to the emergence and development of the jazz dance, the names that influenced the construction of the various styles of contemporary jazz dance. The practical and applied contribution of the presentation stands out in *III.3, III.4, III.5* and *III.6*, namely, contemporary trends in the development of modern jazz dance and its various directions, as well as the established precise technical concepts. In *III.7* special attention is paid to one of the **Titans** of choreography in all its aspects, the **great and inimitable Maurice Bejart**. The detailed presentation of the main modern dance techniques, somatic techniques and methods, contact improvisation or composition is justified.

**Chapter Four: Terminology used in modern dance techniques** is distinguished by its practical-applied orientation, which is brought out in **IV. 3. Conclusions**.

## **6. Contributions and significance of the thesis and the publications on the subject of the dissertation**

The presented contributions are of undeniable importance for the development of the art of choreography and the modern dance. They can be divided into: contributions of a scientific-applied nature and contributions of an applied nature.

I must note that despite the in-depth research of the matter, the historical tracing of the stages of the development of the individual styles, their most prominent representatives and terminology, the author presents us with ease not only a very detailed, but also a fascinating scientific work.

The three publications presented fully correspond to the topic of the work.

## **7. Critical remarks and recommendations**

After an expected **positive assessment** by the scientific jury, the work should be published in the form of a teaching aid and targeted at teacher, dancers and educational institutions in the field of dance.

## **8. Abstract.**

The abstract provides information on all parts of the dissertation work.

## **9. Conclusion.**

In conclusion, I believe that the dissertation work of Riolina Petkova Topalova *Development of Modern Dance in America and Europe. A Comparative Analysis of the Established Techniques*, presents an in-depth, encyclopedic analysis of the subject.

Due to the above, I confidently give my **positive assessment** of the conducted research and propose to the honourable scientific jury to **award** the doctoral student Riolina Petkova Topalova the educational and scientific degree "doctor", professional field 8.3. Music and Dance art, doctoral program Choreography.

01.09.2024

Assoc. Prof Elitsa Lukanova