

STATEMENT
by Associate Professor Dr. Mariana Stancheva Pencheva
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on the dissertation of

Associate Professor Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev
titled
“LEADING DIRECTING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES IN PUBLICATIONS BY
BULGARIAN OPERA DIRECTORS”
for the award of the scientific degree
“DOCTOR OF SCIENCES”

Field of Higher Education: 8. ARTS
Professional Field: 8.3. MUSIC AND DANCE ART
Scientific Specialty: Musicology and Musical Art

The biography of Associate Professor Dr. Petar Odazhiev is extremely rich and impressive, reflecting the wide range of his interests, which he has successfully developed to the fullest. After completing his secondary education at the National Music School “Dobrin Petkov” in Plovdiv, he continued his studies at the National Music Academy “Prof. Pancho Vladigerov” (Sofia), where he graduated with a Master’s degree in Opera Singing in 1992. From September 1993 to June 1998, he studied at the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts “Kr. Sarafov,” earning a Master’s degree. It is also important to mention the two doctoral dissertations he defended at the New Bulgarian University (NBU) and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS).

From 2017 to 2020, Petar Odazhiev studied and worked at the State University of New York in the specialty “Art Management,” earning a Master’s degree. He then worked at the New York Academy of Visual and Performing Arts as a visiting lecturer until 2024. Currently, Odazhiev is an Associate Professor at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, teaching two classes of students in the program “Acting for Dramatic Theater.”

The topic of the dissertation is extremely important and relevant, as it provides a clear and comprehensive understanding of the directing approaches and concepts from the very beginnings of opera theater in Bulgaria to the present day.

The dissertation consists of three chapters with subsections, each of which clearly and precisely summarizes the most important conclusions and findings.

Following the chapters are the “Appendices” and the “Bibliography.” The Appendices include a scientific model for the analysis and description of the methodology of stage realization in opera,

examining different structural axes of analysis: historical-aesthetic, musical-dramaturgical, directorial-staging, and interpretative, through integrative analysis, empirical application of the model, and a formula for evaluating stage realization.

The Appendices also contain copies of the most important publications cited in the study. Finally, the Bibliography includes a large number of references.

Each of the three chapters holds an important place in the dissertation, as each historical stage from the inception of opera in Bulgaria to the present carries its significance. As the author notes, the subject of the study is:

“The methodological and genre-stylistic principles formulated in the authored publications of a representative group of Bulgarian opera directors from the beginning of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, including: Dragomir Kazakov, Konstantin Mihaylov-Stoyan, Petar Raychev, Hristo (Hityo) Popov, Iliya Arnaudov, Khrisan Tsankov, Dragan Kardzhiev, Evgeniy Nemirov, Petar Shturbanov, Mihail Hadzhimishev, Stefan Trifonov, Emil Boshnakov, Svetozar Donev, Pavel Gerdzhikov, Rumen Neykov, Plamen Kartalov, Vanya Bachvarova.” (p. 8)

The first chapter focuses on the three directors who founded the opera theater and established the first Bulgarian professional national opera: Dragomir Kazakov, Konstantin Mihaylov-Stoyan, and Petar Raychev, who studied opera singing in the Czech Republic (Kazakov) and Russia (Mihaylov-Stoyan and Raychev).

Associate Professor Odazhiev traces their pioneering work in detail, emphasizing their idealistic motivations and genuine love for opera, which became a lifelong mission as they introduced and established it in Bulgaria.

As noted on pages 44–45 of the dissertation:

"The three creators – Kazakov, Mihaylov–Stoyan, and Raychev – embody three different yet deeply interconnected dimensions of the development of Bulgarian opera:

- Kazakov – the beginning: the dream and the effort to create a stage;
- Mihaylov–Stoyan – the foundation: structure, organization, and methodology;
- Raychev – recognition: interpretation and professionalism.

Their combined contribution establishes not merely an institution but a value system in which opera is a noble cultural act, a national achievement, and a personal mission."*

In the second chapter, the so-called EARLY PERIOD in the work of the most prominent Bulgarian opera directors is discussed. Its representatives are: Hristo (Hityo) Popov, Iliya Arnaudov, Khrisan Tsankov, Dragan Kardzhiev, and Evgeniy Nemirov. By closely examining their views and aesthetic-artistic principles, the candidate draws the following generalized conclusions about their work:

"In conclusion, these five creators form paradigms that complement each other in a unique way, creating a kind of patchwork of musical-theatrical aesthetics and methodology in opera directing for the period:

- Popov – scientific and psychological realism
- Arnaudov – repertory modernism and a visionary cultural mission
- Tsankov – expressionistic visual-dramaturgical thinking
- Kardzhiev – musical-dramaturgical synthesis and staging theory
- Nemirov – visionary of contemporary opera art

The directors of this period not only lay the foundations of the directing school in Bulgaria but also transform opera into a cultural and intellectual space where history, philosophy, music, and theater converge." (pp. 90–91)

The third chapter addresses contemporary paradigms and leading staging principles in the repertoire of opera classics in its most mature period, including the post-1989 era after the political changes, when Bulgarian opera directing underwent a significant turning point, taking advantage of greater creative freedom.

The directors whose work and publications are analyzed in this period include: Petar Shturbanov, Mihail Hadzhimishev, Stefan Trifonov, Emil Boshnakov, Svetozar Donev, Pavel Gerdzhikov, Rumen Neykov, Plamen Kartalov, and Vanya Bachvarova.

Summarizing the main conclusions of his study, Petar Odazhiev states:

"Despite ideological and stylistic differences between generations, several recurring methodological and aesthetic principles clearly emerge in the texts of the representative directors:

- the central importance of music as the leading structural factor;
- striving for a synthetic stage unity between vocal, visual, and dramaturgical levels;
- attention to the historical and stylistic specificity of each work;
- effort to combine tradition with contemporary stage expressiveness." (p. 266)

The contributions of the work are defined as methodological, applied, and academic. The abstract comprises 70 pages and reliably presents the main points of the dissertation.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation of Associate Professor Dr. Petar Odazhiev contains valuable historical and conceptual information, thoroughly addressing the directing approaches and aspirations of the most significant Bulgarian opera directors from the inception of opera theater in Bulgaria. I recommend, if possible, its publication so that it can serve students studying the history of

Bulgarian opera theater, musical-theatrical arts, and opera directing, and to ensure the preservation of the extensive data contained in it.

I confidently give a positive assessment of Petar Odazhiev's work, "LEADING DIRECTING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES IN PUBLICATIONS BY BULGARIAN OPERA DIRECTORS," and recommend to the respected scientific jury that he be awarded the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor of Sciences" in the scientific specialty Musicology and Musical Art within the professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

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