

Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” Faculty of Pedagogy

REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Yavor Svetozarov Konov, D.Sc. in Arts, New Bulgarian University (NBU)

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts (AMDFA)

Field of Higher Education: 8. Arts

Professional Direction: 8.3. Music and Dance Arts

Scientific Specialty: Musicology and Musical Arts of the Dissertation Thesis entitled:

**LEADING STAGING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES IN PUBLICATIONS OF
BULGARIAN OPERA DIRECTORS**

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev

for the award of the academic degree “Doctor of Sciences” Field of Higher Education: 8. Arts
Professional Field: 8.3. Music and Dance Arts Scientific Specialty: Musicology and Musical Art

1. Subject of the Review

By Order No. ПД-22–1186 of 20.05.2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to carry out the procedure for the defense of the dissertation thesis entitled “Leading Staging Principles and Approaches in Publications of Bulgarian Opera Directors” for the acquisition of the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences” at PU, in the field of higher education: 8. Arts, professional field: 8.3. Music and Dance Arts, scientific specialty: Musicology and Musical Art. The author of the dissertation thesis is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev from the Department of Aesthetic Education at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski.”

The set of materials submitted by the candidate in printed form complies with Art. 45 (4) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU and includes the following documents:

- Application to the Rector of PU for initiating the procedure for defense of the dissertation thesis;
- Dissertation thesis;
- Curriculum vitae in European format;
- Protocol of the Departmental Council related to the initiation of the procedure and the preliminary discussion of the dissertation thesis;

- Author's abstract (summary);
- Author's abstract in English;
- List of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- Copies of the publications related to the dissertation topic;
- Report on compliance with the minimum national requirements.

The candidate has submitted one monograph and 7 scientific articles (6 in English and 1 in Bulgarian). The academic evaluation/review of the work requires it to be considered in the context of the author's professional experience, which is also one of the criteria for assessing the degree of the author's personal involvement in the research and the realization of its scholarly contributions.

2. Brief Biographical Data

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev (b. 1962) possesses extensive experience as a stage director, opera singer, film director, producer, manager, and researcher. He has successfully defended two doctoral dissertations for the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor of Sciences" — the first at New Bulgarian University (NBU), Sofia, in 2012, where I served as his reviewer, and the second at the Institute for Art Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), Sofia. He is also an academic lecturer and public figure, active both in Bulgaria (Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, among others) and the United States (New York, Miami).

His professional experience spans both private and state theaters, opera houses, production companies, academies, and universities, providing him with comprehensive, dual-sector expertise, encompassing the advantages and challenges of each. Consequently, he has acquired a rich personal and professional life experience across multiple domains.

According to archival records, his dissertation at NBU in 2012 was entitled "*The Specifics of Directorial Work in the Construction of an Opera Performance and the Musical-Stage Character*", supervised by Prof. Pavel Gerdzhirov. His subsequent dissertation at BAS (2016) was titled "*The Role of the Director in the Transformation of the Musical from Stage to Screen*".

As a result of his extensive life and professional development, it is entirely natural, in an evolutionary sense, that Petar Odazhiev undertook the present research, now submitted as a habilitation dissertation for the award of the scientific degree of **Doctor of Sciences**.

3. Relevance of the Topic and Appropriateness of the Set Goals and Objectives

The study by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dr. Petar Odazhiev, presented as a dissertation, is not only highly relevant but also exceptionally valuable in its conception. Prof. Odazhiev has undertaken to examine and interpret the works of the most significant figures in Bulgarian opera studies, specifically in the field of opera directing. The dissertation systematically analyzes a total of 17 key personalities, which are reflected in the structure of the three main chapters:

1. **Pre-directorial stage** – Dragomir Kazakov, Konstantin Mihaylov–Stoyan, Petar Raychev.
2. **Early directorial stage** – Hristo Popov, Iliya Arnaudov, Khrisan Tsankov, Dragan Kardzhiev, Evgeniy Nemirov.
3. **Late directorial stage** – Petar Shturbanov, Mihail Hadzhimishev, Stefan Trifonov, Emil Boshnakov, Svetozar Donev, Pavel Gerdzhikov, and the living classics Rumen Neykov, Plamen Kartalov, and Vanya Buchvarova.

The works analyzed are often difficult to access; Prof. Odažiev located, selected, read, studied, and interpreted them, including scanning or photographing them for inclusion as appendices. This ensures the preservation and availability of critical historical sources, enhancing the value of the study. It is hoped that, after the defense, the dissertation will be made publicly accessible online to benefit interested researchers and practitioners.

Prof. Odažiev thoroughly acknowledges previous scholars and commentators on Bulgarian opera, citing them accurately and ethically, adhering to high academic standards. The dissertation rigorously follows research conventions, presenting: the relevance of the topic, degree of literary review, problem justification, object, subject, goals and hypothesis, research tasks, and research methods.

At the conclusion of the dissertation, preceding the appendices (the analyzed texts), Prof. Odažiev provides a comprehensive **“Scientific Model for Analysis and Description of Stage Realization Methodology in Opera”**, structured as follows:

- **Structural axes of analysis:**
 - Historical-aesthetic (3 sub-directions)
 - Musical-dramaturgical (scores and texts, 3 sub-directions)
 - Directorial-stage methodology (4 sub-directions)
 - Interpretative (esthetic paradigms, 4 sub-directions)
- **Integrative analysis:** 4 groups of “component – question – objective”: music and action, space and image, director and author, actualization.
- **Empirical application of the model:** 4 sub-directions.
- **Formula for assessing stage realization:** 4 sub-directions – fidelity to musical logic, stage coherence, esthetic adequacy, relevance and impact, illustrated in a corresponding table.

This comprehensive structure demonstrates Prof. Odažiev’s thorough self-assessment and scholarly rigor.

The contributions of the dissertation are clearly and systematically presented:

- **Methodological contributions:** 5 items
- **Applied contributions:** 4 items
- **Academic contributions:** 6 items
- **Scientific novelty:** 5 levels
- **Perspectives for future research:** 4 main directions

In short, this dissertation is significant both in concept and execution. Its value is further enhanced by the analysis of rare or hard-to-access publications, which reflect the authors' professional and personal interests. Through this work, Prof. Odažiev produces a chronologically complete and integrated panorama of Bulgarian opera directing, connecting it to global practices and deriving a coherent national methodology.

Notably, in alignment with Mozartian principles, music remains the guiding element in opera, which the dissertation consistently emphasizes. The inclusion of the term **“paradigm”** in the title of Chapter 3 underscores the theoretical and methodological depth of the work.

In conclusion, the dissertation **“Leading Directorial Principles and Approaches in Publications of Bulgarian Opera Directors”** by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dr. Petar Odažiev represents a paradigmatic work deserving the awarding of the scientific degree **Doctor of Sciences**, as it establishes a benchmark in the field of Bulgarian opera studies.

4. Knowledge of the Problem

Yes, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dr. Petar Odažiev demonstrates thorough and complete knowledge of the scientific problem addressed in his dissertation. His research reflects deep familiarity with both the historical and contemporary aspects of Bulgarian opera directing.

5. Research Methodology

The selected research methodologies not only allow but also ensure the achievement of the set objectives and provide an adequate framework for addressing the tasks defined in the dissertation. The combination of historical, comparative, systematic, text-centered, and functional-analytical approaches allows for a rigorous and multidimensional study of opera directing practices and theoretical publications.

6–7. Characterization and Evaluation of the Dissertation; Contributions and Significance for Science and Practice

As previously discussed, the dissertation is of exceptional quality. It provides significant methodological, applied, and academic contributions, establishing a robust framework for analyzing the methodology of stage realization in opera. The work is highly relevant for both scholarly research and practical applications in opera direction, education, and critical analysis.

8. Assessment of Publications Related to the Dissertation

The publications include one monograph and seven scientific articles, published in both Bulgarian and international outlets. They are closely connected to the dissertation both thematically and evolutionarily, extending and complementing the research:

1. **Monograph** – “*The Opera Canon and Contemporary Opera Directing*”, Sofia: IK “Cinema”, 2014.
2. **Article** – *The Influence of Psychological Realism and Epic Theatre on the Aesthetics of Opera Directing*
3. **Article** – *The Aesthetic Phenomenon of Opera and the Stage Director’s Approach to Interpretation*
4. **Article** – *The Psychotechnique of the Opera Singer*
5. **Article** – *From Stage to Screen: Exploring Directorial Approaches on Adapting Musicals to Film*
6. **Article** – *The Cinematic Convention of the Film Musical: On Chicago by Rob Marshall*
7. **Article** – *The TV Series as a Fairy Tale: Archetypes, Narrative Structure, and Cultural Resonance*

These publications reflect a coherent development of Prof. Odazhiev’s theoretical investigations, demonstrating sustained scholarly engagement and a clear evolution of his research focus, culminating in the present dissertation. They underscore the originality, depth, and practical relevance of his work.

I quote their descriptions:

MONOGRAPH:

Odazhiev, P. (2014) *The Opera Canon and Contemporary Opera Directing*. Sofia: IK “Cinema,” 2014. ISBN 978-954-2985-05-1

SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES:

1. Odazhiev, P. (2025) *The Influence of Psychological Realism and Epic Theatre on the Aesthetics of Opera Directing*. Proceedings of the XXI International Scientific and Practical Conference “Challenges and Problems of Modern Science,” April 17-18, 2025, London, United Kingdom, pp. 7–18. ISBN 978-92-44514-50-4
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15276887>
2. Odazhiev, P. (2025) *The Aesthetic Phenomenon of Opera and the Stage Director's Approach to Interpretation*. Polish Journal of Science №85 (2025), Vol. 1, pp. 7–15. ISSN 3353-2389
DOI: <https://zenodo.org/records/15253958>

3. Odazhiev, P. (2025) *From Stage to Screen: Exploring Directorial Approaches on Adapting Musicals to Film*. International Journal of Advanced Research 13(03), pp. 120–127. ISSN 2320-5407
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/20544>
4. Odazhiev, P. (2024) *The Psychotechnique of the Opera Singer*. Polish Journal of Science, Issue 81, Vol. 1, pp. 3–8.
DOI: <https://zenodo.org/records/14546207>
5. Odazhiev, P. (2024) *The Cinematic Convention of the Film Musical*. In *Development of Science in the XXI Century*, 2024, pp. 6–10. ISBN 978-92-44514-34-4
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14582364>
6. Odazhiev, P. (2025) *The TV Series as a Fairy Tale: Archetypes, Narrative Structure, and Cultural Resonance*. International Journal of Advanced Research (Feb), pp. 275–284. ISSN 2320-5407
DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/20375>
7. Odazhiev, P. (2012) *The Relationship between Music and Drama in Opera Theatre as a Problem in the Thinking of the Opera Director*. In: *Young Scientific Forum on Music and Dance*, NBU, Sofia, 2012, p. 49. ISSN 1313-342X
<https://music.nbu.bg/download/departamenti/music/sbornik-7.pdf>

9. Author's Personal Contribution to the Dissertation:

Undoubtedly.

10. Author's Abstract:

The abstract fully reflects the structure and content of the dissertation.

11. Critical Remarks and Recommendations:

None.

12. Personal Impressions:

I have known Petar Odazhiev since our military service in 1983—in particular, we were in the Choir of the Construction Troops Ensemble. He was my senior soldier, and I have no complaints about him in that regard, which is already a very positive characteristic. I would also note his broad general knowledge, corresponding curiosity, and upbringing, which were evident even then—and continue to be.

We have not been especially close, which allows me to be an objective and impartial reviewer of his dissertation.

13. Recommendations for Future Use of the Dissertation's Contributions and Results:

As I mentioned above, I hope this dissertation will be made freely accessible on the Internet—it will be useful in itself and through its appendices (the studies of opera directors examined, which are the object and subject of the research).

CONCLUSION:

The dissertation of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev on the topic “*Leading Staging Principles and Approaches in Publications by Bulgarian Opera Directors*” (2025) contains scientific, applied-scientific, and practical results that constitute an original contribution to science (I find no plagiarism) and meets all the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the implementing regulations of LDASRB, and the relevant regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University.

The submitted materials and dissertation results correspond to the minimum national requirements adopted under the University Regulations for the application of LDASRB, exceeding them in Group “A” twice (because P. Odazhiev has two dissertations for the “Doctor of” degree), and in Group “C” (publications related to the dissertation) more than eight times.

The dissertation demonstrates that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev possesses profound theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific field of Musicology and Musical Art, demonstrating the ability to conduct research yielding original and significant scientific contributions.

For the above reasons, I confidently give my **positive evaluation** of the conducted research, presented in the reviewed dissertation, abstract, achieved results, and contributions, and I recommend that the esteemed scientific jury **award the scientific degree of Doctor of Sciences** to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev in the higher education field 8. Arts, professional direction 8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Musicology and Musical Art.

Sofia, Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Reviewer:.....

(Prof. Dr. Yavor Svetozarov Konov, D.Sc. in Arts)