

Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” Faculty of Pedagogy

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Rumyana Karakostova, Associate Member of the “Music” Sector at the Institute of Art Studies – BAS 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

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 dissertation thesis *“LEADING STAGING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES IN PUBLICATIONS OF BULGARIAN OPERA DIRECTORS”* is undoubtedly the first of its kind – an interdisciplinary (integrating theatre studies, musicology, cultural studies) and comprehensive (historical–aesthetic–theoretical) research in the field of Bulgarian opera directing, based on a specific class of documentary sources. More precisely – on chronologically systematized (from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day), thematically specialized publications of a representative group of Bulgarian opera directors, which for the first time are analytically compared and summarized from the perspective of a contemporary practicing and actively publishing director.

At the same time, the present work is a vivid testimony to the thematic and conceptual consistency in the research and the lasting scholarly interests of Assoc. Prof. Odazhiev in directing strategies for the interaction between interpretative staging methods and performance practices in the process of achieving a fully realized opera performance – developed up to this point from different perspectives in his previous works.

In this context, I would also highlight the defining qualification factors from the candidate’s biographical reference:

1. **A director with universal professional qualification** – he consecutively graduated in: opera singing and opera directing at the State Academy of Music/National Music Academy “Prof. Pancho Vladigerov” (1987–1992; 2001–2012); theatre, film and television directing at the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts (NATFA) “Krastyo Sarafov” (1993–1998). He has successfully defended two doctoral dissertations: at New Bulgarian University, in the professional field “Music and Dance Arts” (2013), and in the “Screen Arts” Sector of the Institute of Art Studies – BAS (2016). He worked as Chief Assistant in the “Musical Theatre” Department of the “Music” Sector at the Institute of Art Studies – BAS (2019–2021).
2. **Author of a total of 8 published books** – primarily scholarly works: addressing methodological-research issues and specialized acting techniques for opera and musical theatre.
3. **With personal acting participation or original directing in more than 50 productions** of opera, operetta, and musical theatre performances – staged in musical and theatrical centers across Europe, Asia, and the USA; director of documentary and feature films, as well as television series.

¹ See: Odazhiev, Petar:

1) The Specifics of Directorial Work in the Creation of the Opera Performance and the Musical-Stage Image. Doctoral Dissertation, New Bulgarian University, 2013. Opera Stage. 2) The Opera Canon and Contemporary Opera Directing. Sofia: Cinema Publishing House, 2014. 3) Opera Stage. Acting Training for Opera and Musical Theatre. Sofia: Cinema Publishing House, 2014. 4) Physical Action in the Psychological and Metaphysical Theatre. The Laboratories of Konstantin Stanislavski and Jerzy Grotowski – Pedagogical Aspects. Plovdiv University Press “Paisii Hilendarski,” 2023.

4. **With nearly 10 years of teaching experience and original educational programs,** respectively at:

- New York Academy of Visual and Performing Arts (2016–2019),
- State University of New York (2017–2020),
- Part-time lecturer at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts “Prof. Asen Diamandiev” – Plovdiv (2019–2022),
- Habilitated Associate Professor at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” (since 2023).
- **Producer, manager, director, and pedagogue**, respectively: Director and Manager of the production company *Odavision Ltd.* (1998–2014; 2016–2019), Instructor at the *Musical Theatre Summer Academy* (2020), Director of the production company *Sofia Musical Theatre Ltd.* (since 2021), Lecturer at the *Sofia Academy of Musical Theatre* – with a series of successfully realized independent and co-productions, mainly of musical theatre performances, which, as of 2025, also organizes the *Summer Academy of Arts* in Lozenets, Burgas Region.

In its monolithic entirety, the content of the thesis is exemplary in structure, fully aligned with the established academic standard, as follows: Introduction; Three Chapters; Conclusions and Final Remarks; Appendices; Bibliography (with a total volume of 499 pages, including systematically presented conclusions and final remarks to each individual chapter; two appendices: I. A scientific model for the analysis and description of the methodology of operatic stage realization – with an econometric evaluation matrix and a graphical scheme; II. Supporting material – scanned copies of original documents, publications, archival sources, photographs; and a general Bibliographic List, comprising 83 main thematic sources).

The Introduction of the dissertation thesis includes the argumentation of a total of ten constructive modules, arranged in strict hierarchical sequence: Relevance of the topic; Degree of literature review; Problematic argumentation; Object of research; Subject of research; Research objectives; Research hypothesis; Tasks of the scholarly study; Research methodology; Structure of the research.

At the same time, the formal introduction of the principal terminological framework is not limited to unambiguous answers to the constructive modular test; rather, through the presentation of complementary arguments and their methodologically precise formulations, the multilayered historical–theoretical discourse of the research problem is already projected here – to be further developed in the successive parts of the unified monographic study.

In this sense, and following an extensive literature review – at a duly academic level² – the **Relevance of the topic** is substantiated in the most comprehensive manner, in fact determining the candidate's personal research motivation for its particular choice. This motivation is undoubtedly provoked by certain preliminarily identified fundamental problematizations. Namely: by the strategic emergence, role, and significance of the director as a creative figure in the history of both world and national opera theatre; by the lack of specialized studies that retrospectively trace the development, aesthetic influences, and tendencies in Bulgarian professional opera directing, in a summarizing historical–methodological perspective – precisely through the documented authentic directorial thought; and, not least, by the inevitable conflict within the specific conventionality of the genre correlation – musical–theatrical – as observed in contemporary postmodern experimental interpretations of the aesthetic canon in the classical opera repertoire, particularly in the works of theatre directors without professional musical training.

The chosen research method – based on text-centered analysis, followed by a historical–genetic approach and an interdisciplinary synthesis (according to the rationale of the attached Research Methodology), along with definitively formulated statements for each specific module – not only maximizes the function of the standard dissertation Introduction, but also effectively ensures the optimal level of understanding of the research material by the candidate. This, in turn, logically implies a problem-oriented interpretation within the relevant historical context (according to Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory), before proceeding to its contemporary reflexive interpretation – through the rationally formulated Research Objectives and Tasks. Here, I would especially highlight the radical forward-looking intent of the scholarly study: "...to outline a possible new field of art studies research – methodological and practical issues of directorial art in Bulgarian opera theatre" (Introduction, p. 7).

In confirmation of my initial positive reviewer assessment, the contributory focus of the subsequent Research Hypothesis is also eloquent, as I quote: *"A systematic analysis of the theoretical publications of Bulgarian opera directors from the beginning of the 20th century to the present allows for the derivation of a stable directorial methodology, reflecting the specific synthesis between musical and stage elements within the genre, and offers a model for contemporary interpretation of the opera repertoire in both national and European contexts"* (Ibid).

In view of its convincing substantiation throughout the entire scholarly exposition, I will refer to the overview problem-oriented characterization (with the corresponding assessment of contributions) of the content by chapters.

² See the specifically cited collective scholarly works of the "Musical Theatre" Research Group within the "Music" Sector – Institute of Art Studies, BAS, whose fundamental reference information also served as a starting point for the present dissertation research.

The problem-thematic profile of **Chapter One**, encoded in its very title (*Professionalization of Opera Directing in Bulgaria. Pre-Director Period*), directly draws attention to the cardinal historical–methodological research criterion – the personal/subjective creative professionalization, from the degree of which the historically objective periodization of opera directing in Bulgaria is logically projected. The specifying temporal qualification – “pre-director period” (which historically situates the emergence of the directing profession in global theatre practice) – is, in fact, subjected to analytical scrutiny throughout the research reflections. As a result, it proves fully adequate to the foundational opera–staging model on the Bulgarian stage – entirely reliant on the professional culture and extensive stage experience of the first notable singer–directors, who understandably focused their directorial attention precisely on the emotional impact of the vocal characters and their realistic interpretative presentation in the opera performance.

Moreover, in the historically burdened post-liberation sociocultural atmosphere in Bulgaria at the beginning of the 20th century, and due to its relatively late institutional establishment (compared to the centuries-old European genre tradition), the newly emerging opera theatre provoked diametrically opposed reactions, even fierce public polemics among the progressive intellectual circles of the time – famously referred to metaphorically as the “Opera War.” All the more inspiring for subsequent generations were both the challenging creative vision and the life-long devoted cultural and educational mission of the three enthusiastic founders of Bulgarian national opera – with formal vocal training abroad and subsequent specialization in, respectively, Czechia, Russia, and Italy: Dragomir Kazakov, Konstantin Mihaylov–Stoyan, and Petar Raychev.

Therefore, the detailed exposition of their stepwise personal contributions to the public legitimization of the professional singing, pedagogical, and directorial status, as well as to the subsequent established authority of the first permanent opera theatre in the capital (directly, from the first-person perspective – through their impressive creative biographies, also reflected in their own publications capturing the spirit of the time³), rightfully becomes a strategic focal point of contemporary scholarly reflection in the chapter’s detailed presentation. Meanwhile, the thesis-style summarized, analytical **Conclusions and Final Remarks** – with emblematically derived (mutually complementary) characteristics associated with the names of each individual – are undoubtedly perceived as the quintessence of the research assessment of their personal creative contributions. I quote in summary (according to the Author’s Abstract, pp. 12–17):

Conclusions:

1. Dragomir Kazakov – Visionary of Bulgarian National Opera

³ With primary attention, above all, to their documentary–biographical books: Kazakov, Dragomir. *Materials on the History of the National Theatre and Opera*. Sofia, 1930; Mihaylov–Stoyan, Konstantin. *On the Question of Founding the Bulgarian National Opera*. Sofia, 1907; Raychev, Petar. *Life and Song*. DI Science and Art, 1951

2. Konstantin Mihaylov–Stoyan – Architect of National Opera Identity
3. Petar Raychev – Synthesis of Voice, Thought, and Stage

Final Remarks:

1. Dragomir Kazakov – Ideologue and Founder
2. Konstantin Mihaylov–Stoyan – Builder and Inspirer
3. Petar Raychev – Professionalism at a European Scale

With a view to the conceptual validation of the leading Research Hypothesis, **Chapter Two** (*Musical–Theatrical Aesthetics and Methodology in the Works of Bulgarian Opera Directors. Early Period*) decidedly redirects the focus of the analytical procedure onto the specific directorial issues. Its in-depth commentary is based on the unconditionally stated methodological principles (traced through the author’s series of problem-critical directorial publications) and the type of stage-realized production aesthetics in the highly productive work of five professionally trained opera directors who successfully launched their careers on the Bulgarian stage (from the late 1920s through the 1930s): Hristo (Hityo) Popov, Iliya Arnaudov, Chrisan Tsankov, Dragan Kardzhiev, and Evgeniy Nemirov.

Moreover – thanks to their distinctive creative individuality, prestigious methodological qualifications obtained abroad, and creatively upheld production aesthetics in the spirit of European modernism, according to the researcher’s introductory selective argumentation (see Chapter Two, p. 48): regardless of the “differences in approaches,” “united by a high goal – transforming opera into an intellectual, dramaturgical, and visually expressive art, surpassing the limits of mere musical illustration,” their individual “aesthetic and methodological contributions shape a unique model of stage thinking and interpretation” – practically manifested in the harmonious stage “coexistence of two aesthetic directions: the realistic (Russian school) and the conventional (German symbolism).”

A facilitating role in the professionalization of opera performances, which categorically rejected the profanation of the “costumed concert,” was also played by the hard-won fundamental institutional transformation – through the nationalization of the *Bulgarian Opera Society*, which had existed for more than a decade since its founding (1908), and its conversion into the National Opera (1922), inheriting a first-class troupe of singers under the direction of prominent Bulgarian conductors and choirmasters. Following this model, and again through tremendous missionary efforts (continuing until the early 1970s), to which the most prominent representatives of the next generation of directors enthusiastically joined, a unified network of state and municipal opera theatres in the country was ultimately established – with jury-ranked premieres of their productions at the annually held state Reviews, and subsequently at the organized, zealously maintained, and still ongoing National Festival of Opera, Ballet, and Operetta Art in Stara Zagora.

The critical research pathos, however, as a principled opposition to the manipulative dictates of the officially imposed Socialist Realism Method (from the early 1940s to the late 1980s) – through “censorship of repertoire selection and unceremonious ideological staffing in our opera art” (cf. Conclusions and Final Remarks, pp. 256–257) – convincingly contrasts the intellectual phenomenon and visionary potential of our first professional opera directors. Historically, it is through their names and creative achievements that the decisive contribution to the formation and representativeness of the national Bulgarian school of opera directing is identified.

Most extensively developed, both in terms of the demonstrated respect for the systematized documentary material from problem-oriented directorial publications⁴, and through the candidate’s direct observations accumulated in his active directorial, research, and pedagogical practice to date, is **Chapter Three** (*Contemporary Paradigms and Leading Staging Principles in the Interpretation of the Operatic Repertoire. Mature Period*). In broad terms, its content systematically traces the procedural development of Bulgarian opera directing in its present – Mature period, including, within the conceptually envisioned Representative Group, the creative figures of nine additional Bulgarian opera directors with indisputable staging and pedagogical authority: Petar Shturbanov, Mihail Hadzhimishev, Stephan Trifonov, Emil Boshnakov, Svetozar Donev, Pavel Gerdzhikov, Rumen Neykov, Plamen Kartalov, Vanya Bachvarova.

In fact, the central focus of the exposition is the decoding of the theoretical meaning embedded in the title itself – through a summarizing, systematically analytical commentary on the reformist methodological and staging ambitions relevant to the period (following the political changes in Bulgaria from the late 1980s to the present), and the resulting positive or negative

⁴ See primarily: **Shturbanov, Petar: 1)** *Some Relics on the Opera Stage*. – *Bulgarian Music*, 1960, No. 10, pp. 20–24; **2)** *The Question of Genre in Opera Production*. – *Music Horizons*, 1981, Nos. 9–10, pp. 74–80; **3)** *On the Concept of Ensemble Theatre*. – *Music Horizons*, 1973, No. 8, pp. 68–74; **Hadzhimishev, Mihail: 1)** *Second National Review of Opera, Operetta, and Ballet Art. Stara Zagora National Opera*. – *Bulgarian Music*, 1958, No. 7, pp. 44–49; **2)** *On the Training of Young Singer-Actors in Our Time*. – *Bulgarian Music*, 1972, No. 9, pp. 50–52; **Trifonov, Stefan: 1)** *I Lived for the Opera*. Gea-Libris Publishing House, 2008; **Boshnakov, Emil: 1)** *On Certain Problems and Tasks of Opera Directing*. – *Music Horizons*, 1981, No. 3; **Gerdzhikov, Pavel: 1)** *Bulgarian Music in My Path*. – *Bulgarian Music*, 1974, No. 1; **Donev, Svetozar: 1)** *Theatre and Music. Memoirs and Analyses*. Sofia: Zahariy Stoyanov, 2012; **2)** *On Hard Work in the Light Genre*. – *Kultura*, No. 42, 17 Oct. 1970; **3)** *On Contemporary Operetta Theatre*. – *Narodna Kultura*, No. 10, 6 Mar. 1965; **Neikov, Rumen: 1)** *Brecht and Musical Theatre*. – *Music Horizons*, 1978, No. 6; **2)** *Some Staging Problems of the Opera “Yanina’s Nine Brothers” by Lyubomir Pipkov*. – *Music Horizons*, 1980, No. 4; **3)** *Directing in Ensemble Opera Theatre*. Stara Zagora: Science and Technique, 1995; **Kartalov, Plamen: 1)** *Festival of Opera and Ballet Art Stara Zagora ’75*. – *Music Horizons*, 1976, No. 1; **2)** *“Yanina’s Nine Brothers” – Opera by Lyubomir Pipkov. Directorial Projections*. Sofia: Multiprint Ltd., 2004; *“My Wagner.”* Sofia: Zahariy Stoyanov Publishing, 2020; **Bachvarova, Vanya: 1)** *Acting for Opera Singers*. Xlibris, Publication Date; **2)** *Opera Dramaturgy*. Pan Stil Publishing, Sofia, 1999; **3)** *Impressions from Bayreuth*. – *Music Horizons*, 1977, No. 2; **4)** *Some Staging Problems of the Opera “Yanina’s Nine Brothers” by Lyubomir Pipkov*. – *Music Horizons*, 1980, No. 4; **4)** *Directing in Ensemble Opera Theatre*. Stara Zagora: Science and Technique, 1995

genre–interpretative outcomes in the contemporary stage realization of the classical repertoire traditional to Bulgarian opera theatre. Within the same theoretical framework, the successive emblematic identification of personal contributions – recorded in the clarifying subtitles under the names of the individual directors and concisely argued in the subsequent Conclusions and Final Remarks of Chapter Three – should also be interpreted. I quote again in summary (according to the Author’s Abstract, pp. 30–41):

1. Petar Shturbanov – Builder of the Musical-Philosophical Paradigm in Contemporary Opera Directing
2. Mihail Hadzhimishev – Music as Truth on Stage
3. Stefan Trifonov – The Formation of Contemporary Bulgarian Opera Directing: Between Tradition and Reform
4. Emil Boshnakov – The Model of Intelligent Realism in Bulgarian Opera Directing
5. Svetozar Donev – Between Genre Reform and Cultural Mission
6. Pavel Gerdzhikov – Between Stage Mastery and Cultural Mission
7. Rumen Neykov – Integrator of Musical Dramaturgy and Stage Aesthetics
8. Plamen Kartalov – Opera as Stage Scoring: From Musical Form to Cultural Prophecy
9. Vanya Bachvarova – Between Dramaturgical Analysis and Actor’s Psychophysics

At the same time, I cannot overlook the historically summarizing final observation of the candidate regarding the same chapter – in all three of its defining phases:

1. *“The Bulgarian opera stage, although possessing a long tradition in the field of vocal art, began to develop its independent directorial aesthetics only in the second half of the 20th century. It was then that key figures emerged, whose works, productions, and pedagogical activities elevated directing to an equal element of the synthetic stage art.*
2. *The education and institutional development of directing are treated not as secondary issues, but as strategic questions for the future of the genre. Bachvarova, Gerdzhikov, and Donev emphasize the need for systematic training that integrates vocal, dramatic, and visual culture into a unified educational model.*
3. *Contemporary paradigms in Bulgarian opera directing are the result of a profound synthesis between musical analysis, stage ethics, and cultural mission. They do not reject tradition, but transform it through methodological clarity and artistic inspiration. The pursuit of a complete performance – based on the score, enriched by the director’s vision, and realized through ensemble thinking – remains valid today as a universal criterion for artistic success.”* (Ibid, pp. 52–54)

The final part of the analytical study – **Conclusions and Final Remarks** (reciprocally corresponding to the Introduction) – thoroughly and point by point summarizes the achieved analytical results and outlined prospects, in six main methodological paragraphs, with a progressive academic sequence: Analytical Overview of the Study; Systematization of Main

Conclusions; Contributions (with three specifying subsections: Methodological Contributions; Applied Contributions; Academic Contributions); Scientific Novelty of the Study; Prospects for Future Research; Conclusion. In this case, it would hardly be an exaggeration to characterize the impression of its compact content under the general denominator: **integral research perfectionism**.

An indisputable testament in this regard is the concentrated, systematic exposition already in the introductory paragraph – **Analytical Overview of the Study** – in which the original authorial periodization of opera directing in Bulgaria is convincingly presented. Based on the conclusions and findings from the applied text-centered analysis by chapters, this summarizing periodization conceptualizes in a completely new way – stage by stage, rather than in linear chronology – the evolution of professional Bulgarian opera directing and the accompanying aesthetic–methodological paradigms over the fixed research period (from the beginning of the 20th century to the present decade of the 21st century). By focusing precisely on the indicated fundamental problematizations that determined the choice of the dissertation topic, the candidate reasonably proposes his own conclusive answer to the exhaustively discussed discursive, genre-specific, and interpretative–staging principles – from the inherently stated reflective position of a contemporary practicing and actively writing director.

Similarly, the next paragraph – **Systematization of Main Conclusions** – constitutes further evidence of the researcher’s impeccable conceptual logic, both in the systematic structuring of the analytical process and in the derivation of specific evidence, confirming the previously set Goals and Objectives of the present study. From this perspective, the four final conclusions stand out as having the highest value for the overall positive evaluation of the work, which I quote verbatim (according to the Author’s Abstract, pp. 65–66):

1. *“The empirical basis and interdisciplinary analysis of the study unequivocally confirm that the directorial publications represent an independent and reliable research foundation for studying opera staging methodology and contribute to the development of a model for contemporary interpretation of the opera repertoire in both national and European contexts.*
2. *The figure of the ‘writing director’ serves as a key intermediary between stage practice and theoretical reflection, articulating through texts the processes of artistic decision-making, interpretative exploration, and stylistic transformations, and allowing the derivation of a stable staging paradigm and the definition of contemporary problems and prospects for national opera directing.*
3. *Analysis of more recent directorial publications (after 1990) reveals a clear aesthetic dilemma: between directors with specialized musical training and those of dramatic origin – despite the fact that the contemporary theatrical context questions the stability of genre specificity. In this sense, the results confirm that transformations in directorial thinking from the beginning of the 21st century lead to tension between musical logic and*

theatrical interpretation, which is essential for future research in the outlined new field of art-historical study – methodological and practical problems of directing in Bulgarian opera theatre.

4. *The staging methodology derived from theoretical texts provides a valid framework for applied and pedagogical development – both in directing education and in contemporary production practice.”*

Given the perfect justification and their universal (scientific–theoretical and practical) applicability, I fully accept and applaud the Contributions identified by the candidate in the three main directions: **Methodological Contributions; Applied Contributions; Academic Contributions.**

Functioning as the final categorization of the analytical results, the next paragraph – **Scientific Novelty of the Study** – systematizes a total of five distinctive levels of scientific novelty, which to date have no real analogues in theatrical and musicological scholarly literature.

Particular attention, however – from the perspective of current methods of scientific analysis and contemporary digital archiving technologies – is due to the projected possibilities in the penultimate paragraph, **Prospects for Future Research**, which I quote verbatim (according to the Author’s Abstract, p. 69):

1. *Conducting empirical studies (interviews, surveys, review analyses) related to the reception of specific directorial interpretations by different audiences and generations.*
2. *Expanding the methodology through the analysis of stage artifacts – video archives, director’s notebooks, stage scores, and other materials from theatre collections.*
3. *Comparative study of the Bulgarian directing school with other national schools – e.g., Russian, Czech, Italian, French, German – in order to identify transnational influences and specificities.*
4. *Development of the research toward digital platforms and databases, where directorial texts, staging materials, and analyses can be accessible to future researchers and practitioners.*

The final **Conclusion** of the entire study definitively summarizes the thematic profile, the specialized documentary base, the innovative characteristics, and the main contributions of the conducted interdisciplinary and comprehensive monographic research. I quote:

"The study offers not only a retrospective analysis but also a prospective framework for future developments aimed at enriching educational programs, repertoire policies, and contemporary directing practices in Bulgarian opera theatre. In this summarizing sense, the contribution of the work lies not only in the sphere of scholarly genre knowledge but also in supporting the

necessary creative dialogue both between different generations of directors and between their methodological views and practical stage experience." (Ibid, p. 70)

As a central outcome of the present **Conclusion**, it is duly emphasized that the **Dissertation Hypothesis**, introduced at the beginning of the analytical procedure, has been fully substantiated and confirmed by the evidence.

In confirmation of the strictly accomplished **Objectives** of the study, particular respect is due to the applied experimental **Scientific Model** for the analysis and description of opera staging methodology – including an econometric evaluation matrix and a graphic schema – which far exceeds the standard function of the dissertation's **Appendices** module and should be recognized as an independent scientific contribution. Moreover, its development unequivocally incorporates a self-reflective approach for the assessment of personal music–stage projects and their onstage realizations, as well as the prospective application of the proposed Scientific Model in a specialized lecture course for training opera directors.

My review of the publications presented by Assoc. Prof. Odazhiev in connection with the dissertation is also entirely positive. Naturally, the centerpiece of the list is the independent scientific contribution of the specified monograph: *"The Opera Canon and Contemporary Opera Directing,"* Sofia: IK Cinema, 2014. ISBN 978-954-2985-05-1, which (like the present research) for the first time in Bulgarian scholarly literature thoroughly argues the classically established/canonized genre aesthetics, the specific conventions of opera, and the key interpretative role of the director in opera theatre – tasked with visually and symbolically realizing the composer's ideas in the musical dramaturgy.

Proper attention in this context is also given to the resulting staging and pedagogical principles derived from the specific directing methodology, especially in working with singer–performers, which fundamentally differ from working with actors in dramatic theatre.

A closely related but more problem-oriented and discursively focused publication in the list is the final entry: *"The Relationship Between the Musical and the Dramatic in Opera Theatre as a Problem in the Thinking of the Opera Director"* in the collection: *"Young Scientific Forum for Music and Dance,"* NBU, Sofia, 2012, pp. 49, ISSN 1313-342X <https://music.nbu.bg/download/departamenti/music/sbornik-7.pdf>

Within this publication framework, the remaining six scientific articles in English – with a broader thematic scope – are successively included, published in prestigious international journals with impact factor, the content of which I summarize as follows:

1. 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>

The article traces the development of two fundamentally opposed directing methodologies and their impact on contemporary opera productions. As demonstrated by the study of key theoretical concepts and practices, **psychological realism** – inspired by Konstantin Stanislavski – deepens the emotional layer of operatic storytelling, whereas **epic theatre techniques** – influenced by Bertolt Brecht – provoke a critical reception of the narrative by the audience. In direct comparison: while psychological realism aims for emotional authenticity and deep immersion in the character, epic theatre encourages detachment from the character, emphasizing symbolism and intellectual engagement of the audience. According to the author’s personal observations, however, the two methods are increasingly being combined in contemporary opera directing, creating new expressive means in scenography and the interpretation of musical dramaturgy, while also fostering a dynamic dialogue between performers and the audience.

2. 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>

The study specifically examines the interpretation of the traditional aesthetics of the classical opera canon through a purely dramaturgical approach – influenced by dramatic theatre, which prioritizes theatrical realism over authentic musical expressiveness. It is noted that **postmodern aesthetics** further impact the operatic form, introducing eclecticism and deconstruction that challenge its structural and musical-dramaturgical integrity. In contrast, the author explicitly emphasizes the necessity of maintaining a **balance between music and drama**, while simultaneously highlighting a profound understanding of opera’s artistic principles – a prerequisite for effective directorial practice.

3. The Psychotechnique of the Opera Singer. *Polish Journal of Science* (2024), Issue 81, Vol. 1, pp. 3–8, DOI: <https://zenodo.org/records/14546207>

The article examines specific aspects of the **psychotechnique of opera singer-actors**. It argues for the necessity of developing a stable, specialized psychophysical training, outlining its principles and objectives. The study emphasizes that acquiring professional habits for stage creativity is an essential requirement for a more complete and effective performance, given the multitude of directing and stage elements that must be managed simultaneously. According to the author, following all dramaturgical lines of a role during performance can become a natural process if the appropriate reflexes are developed and consciously reinforced over the long term.

4. 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>

The study primarily debates contemporary directorial practices in adapting stage musicals into film versions. It emphasizes that the adaptive process is not a direct or mechanical transfer from one art form to another. As a corrective against such profaning practice, the research proposes refining directorial methods by integrating elements from experimental and auteur cinema. Additionally, it advocates the creation of a **directorial laboratory**, combinatively applying creative innovations from avant-garde theories and practices characteristic of 20th-century cinematic, theatrical, and musical art.

5. The Cinematic Convention of the Film Musical: On *Chicago* by Rob Marshall. In *Development of Science in the XXI Century*, 2024, pp. 6–10; ISBN 978-92-44514-34-4

The article examines the fundamental aspects of the cinematic specificity of the musical film. The analysis of the selected example demonstrates that the stylistic unity of the film and its narrative components is successful when psychological realism and one-dimensionality are eliminated in favor of grotesque acting, emphasizing a **visual directorial language**—through metaphors, symbols, and focus on the poetics of emotional experiences. In conclusion, the author convincingly argues that the cinematic narrative of the musical film inherently contains elements of spontaneous theatricality, intrinsic to the musical as an aesthetic quality, inherently highlighting the phenomenon of the genre itself.

6. 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>

The article examines the television series as a contemporary form of fairy tale, with an analytical focus on the use of archetypal characters, classical narrative structures, and their relation to cultural context. TV series often reproduce elements from myths and fairy tales—characters, journeys, obstacles, and moral lessons—adapting these models to contemporary reality. Through universal archetypes and plot schemes, series establish a strong emotional and cultural connection with audiences, serving not only as entertainment but also as a reflection of enduring human values, obsessions, and aspirations. The study emphasizes the role of the TV series as a modern fairy-tale form with profound cultural resonance.

Attached in a separate archival folder under the general title: **OTHER MATERIALS VERIFYING INTERESTS IN THE RELEVANT SCIENTIFIC FIELD** – these materials, also serving as additional references to the Publications submitted with the dissertation and to the candidate's personal stage achievements in recent years, clearly demonstrate the positive critical

reviews published in authoritative specialized journals (e.g., *LiterNet* | *Cultural News*; *Musical Horizons*; *Theatre*).

Based on the comprehensive content analysis conducted so far and the highlighted positive reviewer evaluations, I confirm that the author's personal participation in the research, as well as the formulated contributions and obtained results, are entirely and unquestionably his own.

The author's abstract fully corresponds to the content of the dissertation and meets the academic structural standards.

CONCLUSION: The dissertation titled “**LEADING STAGING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES IN PUBLICATIONS BY BULGARIAN OPERA DIRECTORS**” by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev contains scientific, scientific-applied, and applied results that constitute an original contribution to the field and comply with all requirements of the **Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB)**, the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB, and the relevant Regulations of **Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv**.

The submitted materials and dissertation results fully meet the minimum national requirements adopted in accordance with the University Regulations for the application of LDASRB. The dissertation demonstrates that the candidate possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific field of **Musicology and Musical Art**, showing the capacity and competence to conduct research that produces original and significant scientific contributions.

For the above reasons, I confidently give a positive assessment of the research presented in the reviewed materials: the Dissertation, Author's Abstract, and Publications related to the dissertation, which have achieved high scientific results and original contributions. I therefore strongly recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury award the academic degree of **Doctor of Science** to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev in the Higher Education Field: **8. Arts**, Professional Field **8.3. Music and Dance Arts**, Scientific Specialty: **Musicology and Musical Art**.

Budapest, June 6, 2025 г.

Reviewer:.....

(Prof. Dr. Romyana Karakostova)