

STATEMENT
by Associate Professor Dr. Svilen Raychev
National Music Academy “Prof. Pancho Vladigerov”, Sofia

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

Petar Odazhiev graduated from the Bulgarian State Conservatory (now National Music Academy), Sofia, in 1992, specializing in Opera Singing. He subsequently completed studies in Musical-Theatrical Directing at NMA and Film and Television Directing at NATFIZ.

In 2020, he obtained a Master’s degree in Art Management from the State University of New York.

In 2013, he earned the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in Directing and Singer-Actor Work with a scientific specialty in Musicology and Musical Art at NBU.

In 2016, he developed a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in the scientific specialty Film Studies, Cinematic and Television Arts at BAS.

Since 2023, he has held the position of Associate Professor at Paisii Hilendarski University.

He has occupied managerial positions in several prestigious institutions and has participated in the preparation and implementation of projects in theatrical and screen genres, as well as in educational projects, seminars, and workshops. He is the recipient of diplomas and awards from national and international film, theater, and music festivals.

The dissertation comprises a total of 497 pages, including an introduction, three main chapters with subsections, conclusions, appendices, and a bibliography.

I am impressed by the way the dissertation is conceived and structured — academically, with excellent style.

The main objective of this work is to present the aesthetic and methodological views of leading Bulgarian opera directors from the beginning of the 20th century to the present and to outline their methodological and genre-stylistic principles. A systematic analysis of the theoretical publications of Bulgarian opera directors has been conducted, which enables the formulation of a stable directing methodology.

The idea of conducting a thorough study and analysis, with a deliberate “selection” of publications over different periods from a representative group of Bulgarian opera directors, is in itself a significant challenge. The concepts, principles, and methods underlying their stage decisions in their individual directorial interpretations have been summarized.

The first chapter of the study is titled **“Professionalization of Opera Directing in Bulgaria: The Pre-Directorial Period.”** It illustrates the enthusiasm of the founders — Dragomir Kazakov, Konstantin Mihaylov-Stoyan, and Petar Raychev — whose approach was based on intuition and a striving for harmonization between music, dramaturgy, and acting. However, as the author emphasizes, they paved the **“main bridge toward the institutionalization of opera art in Bulgaria.”** They created the first sustainable platform for the development of Bulgarian opera artists, introducing systematic approaches, pedagogy, and music-theoretical foundations into Bulgarian opera practice, and laid the groundwork for modern opera directing in the country.

The second chapter is titled **“Musical-Theatrical Aesthetics and Methodology in the Work of Bulgarian Opera Directors: Early Period.”** It reflects the development of Bulgarian opera directing in the first half of the 20th century, when the foundation of professional staging practice in the country was established, as well as the period 1944–1989, which marked a fundamental transformation in Bulgarian opera art.

The chapter examines the work of:

- **Hristo (Hityo) Popov** – the first professional director in Bulgarian opera,
- **Iliya Arnaudov** – director-philosopher and visionary of the Bulgarian opera scene,
- **Hrisan Tsankov** – modernist and transformer of Bulgarian stage art,
- **Dragan Kardzhiev** – builder of contemporary Bulgarian opera directing, and
- **Evgeniy Nemirov** – architect of the modern opera vision in Bulgaria.

I quote: “The directors of this period not only laid the foundations of the directing school in Bulgaria but also transformed opera into a cultural and intellectual space where history, philosophy, music, and theater intersect.” (p. 27 of the Author’s Abstract)

Odadjiev emphasizes that during this period, an operatic style emerged with artistic depth in the musical-dramaturgical image, and a repertoire strategy aimed at diversity and cultural education. The opera director establishes themselves as an **aesthetic organizer of the stage reality**, rather than merely a coordinator of performers. They approach the score not only as a musical text but as a source of emotional action, stage structure, and logic. A creative synchronization between director, conductor, and set designer becomes necessary. This period sees the formation of an **opera-directing school in Bulgaria**.

The third chapter, “**Contemporary Paradigms and Leading Staging Principles in the Interpretation of Repertoire Opera Classics: Mature Period**,” focuses on the period after the political changes of 1989. The dissertation concentrates on the work of nine leading opera directors, highlighting their staging principles:

- **Petar Shturbanov** – the first to create a directing methodology
- **Mikhail Hadzhimishev** – analysis of musical dramaturgy
- **Stefan Trifonov** – theatrical principles adapted to musical dramaturgy
- **Emil Boshnakov** – directing as the leading creative and structural force in opera
- **Svetozar Donev** – changing the approach to operetta
- **Pavel Gerdzhikov** – defender and interpreter of Bulgarian musical culture, with an analytical approach to role development
- **Rumen Neykov** – cultural critic and publicist with analytical acumen
- **Plamen Kartalov** – opera as a synthetic art form (music, text, dance, philosophy, acting, visual effects) and opera as a contemporary message
- **Vanya Bachvarova** – created the first specialized program in opera directing at NBU, highlighting the fundamental difference between dramatic and opera actors

The specific contributions of each of these key figures in Bulgarian musical-stage art are clearly demonstrated.

In the conclusion, an attempt is made to summarize the issues and highlight the main contributions of the work. I quote: “The director is not merely a mediator between composer and audience but a co-author in the process of artistic creation.” (p. 52 of the Author’s Abstract)

In the various sections of the dissertation, the principal features of the methodology and directorial approach of the key directors are emphasized and highlighted.

The dissertation is not merely a historical or chronological study of a particular genre or era. It represents an **analytical reflection of the author on the traditions of Bulgarian opera directing**. The work is highly useful and will serve young people studying this art form.

This dissertation enriches our scholarly literature and can serve as a foundation for new scientific studies. It has a **strong applied character**, making it a natural link between the past and the prospective development of Bulgarian musical-stage art.

Through concise, clear, and assertive reasoning, the candidate raises questions while subtly expressing his personal vision and attitude toward the subjects discussed.

I fully agree with the contributions outlined by the author in the dissertation. The candidate also has the necessary scholarly publications on the subject.

In conclusion, I affirm that the dissertation by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Odadjiev** is contributory both theoretically and practically. With his overall work and contributions, the candidate **meets the requirements for obtaining the academic degree of “Doctor of Sciences.”**

I give my **positive** evaluation of the research presented in the reviewed dissertation, the abstract, and the achieved results and contributions, and I recommend that the esteemed scientific jury award the academic degree of **Doctor of Sciences** to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Zapryanov Odazhiev in the field of Higher Education 8. Arts, Professional Field 8.3. Musical and Dance Art (Scientific Specialty: Musicology and Musical Art).

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Prof. Dr. Svilen Raychev