

## **REVIEW**

by Assoc. Prof. **ASSIA HRISTOVA IVANOVA**, PhD

Department Theater, NBU

Professional field 8.4 Theatre and Film Arts

on the doctoral dissertation

by **HRISTINA ATANASOVA PIPOVA**

on topic

***"RHYTHM & BLUES" I AND II BY RUMEN TSONEV -  
CREATIVE PROJECTION OF AN AVANT-GARDE MUSICAL THEATER  
AND POSTMODERN VOCABULARY***

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

Professional field: 8.3. Music and Dance Art

*Scientific supervisor: Prof. D.Sc. Elisaveta Valchinova-Chendova*

Hristina Atanasova Pipova graduated with a bachelor's degree in folk singing in the class of Nelka Petkova (2009) and a master's degree in pop and jazz singing with Prof. Rumen Tsonev (2013). in programs of the "Music" department, New Bulgarian University. An impression is made by Hristina Pipova's desire to upgrade and expand the field of her education by actively participating in additional courses and professional events - the master classes of Milcho Leviev and Viki Almazidou (scholarship award:, 2009); performance for the presentation of the "Icarus" awards under the direction of Prof. Rumen Tsonev (2008); International competition for jazz vocals "Crown of Tarnovgrad" with vocal leader Vicky Almazidou; International folklore competition "Pautalia 2008" with tambourine and folk singing; successful casting for the "Three Ks", announced by Prof. Rumen Tsonev at the NBU; jazz improvisation course with Prof. Angel Zaberski; Nina Naydenova's acting course; participation in the "Folk-jazz formation" of Prof.

Georgi Petkov in the period 2006 - 2012; tambourine lessons under the guidance of Prof. Georgi Petkov. etc.

Hristina Pipova's professional performances began during her studies at NBU, participating in a number of stage formats under the guidance of Prof. Rumen Tsonev. In 2012, she was included in the cast of "Rhythm & Blues" 2 at the MGT "Zad Kanala". Apart from Sofia, the performance has been presented on many other stages in the country and abroad, as well as at the two most significant performing arts festivals in Bulgaria - "Varna Summer" and "Apolonia".

The joint work with Prof. Rumen Tsonev, as well as the fact that he donated his personal archive to Hristina Pipova, are a prerequisite for in-depth research and analysis from the point of view, above all, of the performer.

The thesis proposed for defense "RHYTHM & BLUES I AND II BY RUMEN TSONEV - CREATIVE PROJECTION OF AVANT-GARDE MUSICAL THEATER AND POSTMODERN VOCABULARY" by Hristina Pipova has a volume of 216 pages, of which 193 pages are main text structured as follows: introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography with 98 sources used: 41 in Cyrillic, 41 in Latin and 16 Internet resources (sites and video materials). The paper also contains the following two appendices:

Appendix I - author's notes and sheet music manuscripts.

Appendix II – inventory of the personal archive of Prof. Rumen Tsonev.

The well-formulated title of the dissertation gives a clear idea of the thematic field and issues in which the text is located.

Hristina Pipova's research is dedicated to the topic of avant-garde musical theater in Bulgaria and the role of Prof. Rumen Tsonev in establishing it on the stage of Bulgarian culture. This topic is significant for several key reasons:

- First, avant-garde musical theater is a poorly researched area in Bulgarian musicology and theater studies. The Bulgarian scene is traditionally more conservative compared to European avant-garde currents, which makes the contribution of Tsonev and his productions "Rhythm & Blues" I and II all the more important.
- Second, Pipova considers avant-garde musical theater as a kind of cultural bridge between the Bulgarian and European scenes, more specifically in the context of postmodernism. This aspect adds scientific and applied value to the dissertation, positioning it in an international

context and opening the way for new interpretations of Bulgarian musical art in a global perspective.

- Third, the fact that Hristina Pipova is not only a researcher, but also a participant in stage projects, gives her work a special authenticity and depth of analysis.

The goals and tasks of the dissertation work are clearly and correctly formulated. The main aim of the research is to present "avant-garde musical theatre" as an art form combining elements of music and theater in a new aesthetic dimension. The tasks of the work are aimed at:

- Analysis of the postmodern characteristics of the avant-garde musical theater and their manifestation in the works of Rumen Tsonev.

- Reconstruction of the scenarios and musical scores of the performances "Rhythm & Blues" I and II, based on archival materials provided personally by Tsonev.

- Assessment of the significance of Tsonev as a key figure in the development of this genre in Bulgaria.

These goals and objectives are consistent with the requirements for the doctoral degree and demonstrate a high level of scientific systematization.

The dissertation is an independent study and does not repeat verbatim the topic or a significant part of the content of other works. The key factor that underlines the originality of the research is the use of the personal archive of Prof. Rumen Tsonev, provided to Pipova. This unique database enables the author to bring forth new interpretations and present authentic material not available in other sources. The research shows in-depth knowledge of the material and expands the horizons of musical criticism in Bulgaria.

Hristina Pipova demonstrates a solid knowledge of the researched problem and relies on a rich scientific literature. The dissertation incorporates key studies from the fields of postmodernism, musical theater and the avant-garde, while also using contemporary sources related to the development of these genres in Europe. Among the more significant theoretical sources that the author cites are the works of Prof. Rumen Tsonev, as well as the studies of prominent musicologists such as Wolfgang Ruff and Jean-Yves Bosseur.

The literature used is diverse, including both monographs and articles published in academic publications, in both Cyrillic and Latin. This provides a comprehensive view of the studied phenomenon and enhances the academic value of the work.

Citation in the dissertation is correct and meets academic standards. Hristina Pipova uses a representative number of authors and correctly cites their works. Also, the author makes clear and well-reasoned connections between the various sources and her own interpretations, while also including her own music-theatre observations and experiences.

The dissertation offers a well-grounded and developed theoretical model. The main emphasis is placed on postmodernism and its manifestations in avant-garde musical theater. The author analyzes the performances "Rhythm & Blues" I and II as postmodern cultural products that break the traditional boundaries between music and theater. This approach is relevant and consistent with the research objectives, allowing for an in-depth analysis of Tsonev's performances in the context of the European theater and music scene.

The methodology and methodology of the research fully correspond to the set goals and objectives. The approaches used include both theoretical analysis and artistic-interpretive methods, which allow the author to enter the depth of the problem under consideration. Particularly significant is the reconstruction of the scenarios and musical scores, which is based on Rumen Tsonev's personal archive and Pipova's personal experience as a participant in these performances.

The material on which the dissertation contributions are based is authentic and of high credibility. The personal archive of Prof. Rumen Tsonev, which Hristina Pipova uses, represents a unique source of information that has not been studied in detail until now. This gives a special scientific value to the study and makes the author's contributions even more remarkable.

The main contributions of the dissertation can be summarized as follows:

- Presentation and analysis of "avant-garde musical theater" as a new genre in Bulgarian musical and theatrical art.
- Reconstruction of the scenarios and stage realizations of the performances "Rhythm & Blues" I and II.
- Research of the postmodern elements in the work of Rumen Tsonev and their significance for the Bulgarian cultural scene.
- Introduction of a new theoretical framework for the analysis of musical and performing arts in Bulgaria.

Hristina Pipova made a significant personal contribution to the collection and analysis of the empirical material. Her participation in the performances "Rhythm & Blues" I and II gives her the opportunity to make an authentic and in-depth analysis of stage realizations and to offer new interpretations of these productions.

Pipova has publications on the topic of the dissertation in academic publications that reflect the main contributions of the research. Publications contribute to the promotion of research and provide wider access to its results in the academic community.

At the moment, there is no evidence of widespread citation of the research, but the dissertation has the potential to be significantly cited in the future, due to its innovative topic and contribution to Bulgarian music and theater science.

The research, analysis and description carried out largely fulfill the tasks set in the dissertation work, and it can definitely be said that the goal formulated in the dissertation has been successfully fulfilled. The contributions and results achieved are accurately presented in the doctoral student's auto-abstract, which is prepared according to all requirements and reflects very well the content of the main text. The abstract is in a volume of 28 pages, which include a reference to the contributions and previous publications of the doctoral student.

Based on the research presented, we can conclude that the author has deep theoretical knowledge and good research skills. Her work shows a dedication to the subject and an ability to analyze complex and multi-layered phenomena in music and theatre.

Hristina Pipova's research is thorough and well structured. It would be advisable in the future to expand the analysis of avant-garde musical theater in an international context to see how Bulgarian works fit into the global cultural scene. Also, additional empirical data from Tsonev's other performances could contribute to a more complete picture of his work.

**In conclusion**, Hristina Pipova's dissertation is a scientifically significant study that presents an original and important contribution to musicology and theater art in Bulgaria. The work is thorough, substantiated and demonstrates independence and an innovative approach.

Based on what has been stated so far and my overall positive assessment, I can categorically state that the dissertation work "RHYTHM & BLUES" I AND II BY RUMEN TSONEV - A CREATIVE PROJECTION OF AVANT-GARDE MUSICAL THEATER AND POSTMODERN VOCABULARY" proposed by Hristina Pipova meets all the requirements for

the acquisition of an educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a Professional field: 8.3. Music and Dance Art. As a member of the scientific jury, I confidently vote "FOR" the award to Hristina Pipova. I vote YES!

Sofia 27.09.2024

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