

OPINION

by **Assoc. Prof. Rositsa Dimitrova Becheva,**

New Bulgarian University,

on the thesis of **Hristo Ivanov Dimitrov,**

Professional field 08.03 Music and Dance Art,

PhD student at New Bulgarian University,

On the theme:

NATIONAL FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE BULGARE. MANAGING AND CREATIVE APPROACHES

for the award of the PhD educational and scientific degree

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Georg Kraev, PhD

Biographical data:

Hristo Dimitrov was born on 7th October 1969 in the town of Varna, but lived and completed his secondary education in Shumen. Since the he was ten years old, he danced Bulgarian folk dances in amateur groups. In 1990 he was enrolled to study at the Academy of Music and Dance Art in Plovdiv, specializing in choreography and directing. He graduated in 1994 in the class of prof. Petar Lukanov. He lived in Plovdiv, where he worked in the entrepreneurial, publishing and advertising business until 2000, after that he moved to Sofia.

The following are some of the main moments of the artistic biography of Hristo Dimitrov:

Hristo Iv. Dimitrov is the founder of the NFE Bulgare and the author of all the performances of the ensemble. On 1st October 2002 Hristo Dimitrov and his sister Elena Anderson started the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare - the largest private professional folklore ensemble in Bulgaria. On 3rd April 2003 the ensemble made its debut on the professional stage in Hall 1 of the National Palace of Culture in Sofia, with the premiere of the music and dance folklore performance *This is Bulgaria!*, created by Hristo Dimitrov. On the eve of the Third of March 2012, on the occasion of the National Day of Bulgaria, was shown the premiere of the screened version of the performance of the NFE Bulgare - *This is Bulgaria!*. In 2015 started the creation of the most impressive performance of the ensemble - *The Eight Wonder*, whose premiered was in June 2016. As a choreographer and director, Hristo Dimitrov created a number of performances, such as *Sea Stories*, *Bulgaria in Europe*, *The Last Night of the Apostle*, etc. Since the beginning Hristo Dimitrov was the producer of NFE Bulgare. In the period 2007-2019 he produced various performing ensembles: the women's trio *Soprano*, the three Bulgarian tenors from the trio *Unique Voices*, the soprano trio *Le contesse*. In 2011 he founded the National Impresario Network, of which many Bulgarian artists of different genres became part.

Organizer and co-author of patriotic initiatives, Hristo Dimitrov is the founder of the Bulgare Foundation (2004) and its chairman for already 16 years. Its mission is maintaining, preserving and promoting Bulgarian folklore and cultural heritage in Bulgaria and abroad, he was co-organizer of the National Campaign Let's fly the Bulgarian flag! In 2014, on his idea and with his active participation, the association Guardians of Bulgardom was founded. In January 2015, in Plovdiv, on his initiative, was created the Association of Bulgarian Choreographers; on 26 February 2019, the National Television Bulgare was officially launched.

Creator of festivals and cultural traditions, namely: International Festival of the Folklore Costume in Zheravna - created and organized by Hristo Dimitrov, Bulgare Foundation and co-organizers. The festival was held annually since 2008, Annual Awards in the field of dance art Golden Muse, International Festival of Dance Art, Kranevo, of which Bulgare Foundation is a co-organizer, etc.

Holder of awards and honours: 2014 - Honorary Badge "Golden Century" (seal of Tsar Simeon the Great) and a diploma from the Ministry of Culture for his great contribution to the development of Bulgarian culture, on the occasion of 24th May 2017 - Honorary Plaque "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" awarded by the President of the Republic of Bulgaria Mr. Rumen Radev on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the NFE Bulgare, 2020 - Order "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" - first degree by Decree No103 of 1st June 2020 of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria Mr. Rumen Radev, etc.

Content of the thesis

The thesis consists of 236 and has an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, contributions, references - 220 sources in Cyrillic, a glossary of some rare, obsolete and dialect words and expressions, publications related to the thesis, annexes (*Annex 1*. Moral code of the NFE Bulgare. *Annex 2*. Regulations for the organization of large performances of the NFE Bulgare. *Annex 3*. Interviews with famous Bulgarian choreographers on the issues of folklore dancing. *Annex 4*. Disc with a version of the performance The Eighth Wonder)

The **subject** of the survey are the management, managerial and creative approaches for private professional folklore ensembles as an artistic and creative environment and factor for the creation of contemporary performing art.

The **object** of the survey is the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare as a new and alternative form for improving managerial and creative approaches in the organization of private professional art with a view of artistry re-creation of traditional Bulgarian folklore into contemporary performing art on folklore basis.

The PhD candidate outlines the main goal and objectives of the survey, matching scientific research and practical approach to the problem.

The main goal of the thesis is to present the current state of the management and the artistic and creative work in the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare (NFE) as a model example for the functioning of a private professional folklore ensemble in the conditions of a market

economy. On this basis, identify and present the chronotope of managerial and creative approaches in the artistic re-creation of traditional Bulgarian folklore, turning it into a contemporary artistic product. Present the achieved results and propose new managerial and creative forms for the management and organization of artistic and creative production, in accordance with the specifics of classical folklore culture and with the process of creation in a competitive market environment.

The **tasks** the PhD candidate had were:

-To review and analyze the achievements of the NFE and to assess its impact on the development of professional folk dance art in a market economy.

-To present the author's approaches in the interpretation of traditional Bulgarian folklore and in its turning into a product of contemporary dance art.

-To analyze the management structure and the legal framework of the private folklore ensemble and to present the management characteristics of a folklore ensemble of this kind as basis for a creative interpretation of Bulgarian dance folklore.

-To present and analyze the professional managerial functions and the artistic management of the chief artistic director of the private folklore ensemble along the process creating the artistic product.

-To present the different educational approaches in the course of creating the folklore performance as well as the main directions in the field of art management.

Author's thesis statement: The author's thesis stand favours a paradigm shift defining the professional functions of leadership, management and creative adaptation of the private professional folklore ensemble given modern market economy. The meaningful adaptation, the behaviour of the participants in the creative process, at the background of inherited folk values, all these are prerequisites for folk dance art's new positioning, own specificity of functioning and existing within the scope of contemporary dance art of Bulgaria. The creation of a completely new and valuable performing art product, which is not only competitive, but also profitable in the conditions of a market economy, guarantees its functionality.

From the analysis of the state of the problem presented in the abstract, it becomes clear that: "Developing a future management model for Bulgarian folk art as a fundamental part of the country's cultural policy in the context of the present day dynamic developments, marked with financial instability and given the established patterns of business management in a market economy is a real challenge." "Thus, this survey turns to searching reasoned solutions to the crisis issues related to management, focusing on the specifics in contemporary folklore-based artistic creation, requiring the creation of a market based model for the functioning of folklore art as a system." "Finding an alternative solution is an ambitious task set for the thesis survey. This task requires the search and creation of managerial and creative approaches leading to efficient management of private forms of folk art, according to the specificity of the processes of creating a competitive artistic and creative product and its dissemination. "

As the doctoral student points out, "The research problem results from the fact that managing and financing folk art requires a market oriented attitude of the private folk ensemble and of the artists." "There are no present day scholarly works on the creative approaches in the adaptation of folklore-based music and dance for the stage. Conducting this kind of research would necessitate a change in the management structure of folklore ensembles, it would give new creative tools at their disposal and would enable traditional folk art develop in a constructive way and having it back as part of the foundations of the cultural policy of Bulgaria."

The doctoral candidate also explains that the research approaches applied in the thesis fall within the theoretical field of cultural studies, semiotics, aesthetics and sociology of culture; semantic and structural analysis, systematization, classification and typology. The methodology used is consistent with the specifics of the research problem. The methods used are: empirical research, survey of sources with information, observations, probing, sharing main organizational and artistic experience.

The limitations of the survey put outside the scope of the thesis the following: some of the genres of traditional folklore, amateur music and dance art, state formations with creative activity on folklore basis, the audience as a corrective for quality.

In **Chapter 1: Historic overview of the origin and the development of Bulgarian professional folk dance art**, in a historical perspective, the research focuses on: the first professional folk ensembles, the problems related to management, financing, repertoire and concert activity of the professional folk ensembles, the development of professional dance art till the arrival of the first private National Folk Ensemble Bulgare, with special attention set to the role of the chief artistic director in the state folklore ensemble.

In **Chapter 2** of the thesis **The Creation of the First Private National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare. Managing approaches**, observations and analyses were made on the structure and management of the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare, on the methods for training professional performers of Bulgarian folk dances in the NFE Bulgare.

The definition and the content of the concept for a *private professional folklore ensemble* are specified: 'A private professional folklore ensemble is that kind of ensemble that bases its work on the established performing traditional music and dance folklore, in it the performers are professionals in the field of music and choreography and they are not subsidized by the State or the municipal institutions, but only through their own activity. "

On the basis of a comparative analysis, findings and conclusions are presented in a summary concerning the similarities and differences between the NFE Bulgare and the other ensembles in terms of structure, management, choice of repertoire, creative approaches used in the presentation of folklore, the need for the existence of formations similar to the NFE Bulgare is explained.

In **Chapter 3, Basic creative approaches in creating a contemporary folk dance performance**, the focus of research attention is on the creative principles applied. In this context examples of developments related to the re-creation of traditional Bulgarian folklore in contemporary dance art are presented, shown and analyzed are the core characteristics of the performance *The Eighth Wonder* - "a carried example of artistic recreation of certain fragments of the traditional Bulgarian folklore" and its logical structure.

This chapter discusses issues related to contemporary dance art as a means of reviving the Bulgarian spirit and culture.

The many year experience in the field of dance art of the PhD candidate finds its expression in the ideas, solutions, working modes presented in this chapter, which has a strong practical orientation.

The practical results of the survey appear as conclusions and annexes: theoretical conclusions, practical developments – annexes created and tailored in support of the scientific thesis statement.

Of particular importance to me is Annex 3. Interviews with famous Bulgarian choreographers on the problems of dance folklore. The interviews were conducted in relation to the scientific and applied thesis survey and they reflect the personal opinions of 14 prominent Bulgarian choreographers - leading figures in the art of dance in Bulgaria.

The **end notes** sum up the most significant conclusions from the different parts of the work, the recommendations and the contributions. Some points are put forth as very important by the PhD candidate, namely:

- The diversification of the artistic work, the product of folklore performing art, implies a flexible management in the dynamic market economy environment;
- ...the adequate functioning of a private folklore ensemble requires high competencies related to management - *цречтиве*/artistic and administrative

Significance of the surveyed problem in scientific and applied context

- shared personal experience of the author - in theoretical and practical sense

Degree of knowledge of the state of the surveyed problem and relevance of the literature used

The doctoral candidate has used a sufficient amount of sources of information, the reference to which is correct.

Contributions of the thesis

I accept the contributions of the thesis, among which:

- For the first time a scientific survey is focussed on private professional folk performing art, its management and creative adaptation during the present period of historical and economic development of Bulgaria.

- The survey contains an original author's methodology, which effectively combines different creative methods for interpreting and turning the traditional Bulgarian dance folklore into contemporary dance art and for task achievement.

The PhD candidate analyzes and surveys, applying theoretical and practical methods of scientific research. It is noteworthy that the content is presented with precise continuity, showing the personal view and attitude of the doctoral student. The aim of the survey has been achieved and the set tasks have been fulfilled.

The presented research has practical and applied contributions.

The foregoing determines the thesis as a text constituting a contribution.

Assessment of the relevance of the thesis outline to the main points and contributions of the thesis

The thesis outline, consisting of 26 pages, corresponds to the thesis and conveys the character of the doctoral work.

Publications on the topic of the thesis

The PhD candidate has a sufficient number of publications on the theme of the thesis.

PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE THESIS

1. Dimitrov, Hristo. Folklore traditions and customs in contemporary Bulgarian choreographic art. In: Young scientific forum for music and dance, Sofia, NBU, compendium 7/2013.

2. Dimitrov, Hristo. Problems in creating and managing a private professional folklore ensemble. (1st part) In: Music horizons, N° 9/2013.

3. Dimitrov Hristo, Problems in creating and managing a private professional folklore ensemble. (2nd part) – In: Music horizons, N°10/2013

Participation in: Seventh Scientific Conference for Doctoral Students with International Participation "Young Scientific Forum for Music and Dance" with a paper entitled: Folklore Traditions and Customs in Contemporary Bulgarian Choreographic Art. 7-19 June 2012, NBU, Sofia.

Opinions, recommendations and remarks

I would recommend to Hristo Dimitrov to possibly publish this work in order to have it accessible to a wider audience.

In conclusion:

I give my positive evaluation for the thesis of Hristo Dimitrov: *THE NATIONAL FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE BULGARE. MANAGING AND CREATIVE APPROACHES,*

with regard to its contributions and its scientific and applied qualities. I consider that the doctoral thesis of the PhD candidate fully meets the requirements for obtaining the PhD educational and scientific degree in the professional field 8.3 "Music and Dance Art" under the Law on the Development of Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award it to him.

Assistant Professor Rositza Becheva, PhD

17.10.2022

Sofia