

REVIEW

From **prof. Nikolay Tsvetkov,**

Lecturer at the Department of Choreography

South-Western University Neofit Rilski - Blagoevgrad

on the thesis for the award

of the PhD educational and scientific degree (Doctor)

Reason: member of the scientific jury for the defence of a thesis in accordance with the order № 3-RK-284 / 26.07.2022 of the Rector of the New Bulgarian University, city of Sofia.

Author of the thesis:

Hristo Ivanov Dimitrov

- PhD student on an independent schedule with the PhD programme "Music"

Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

Theme of the thesis: *NATIONAL FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE BULGARE. MANAGING AND CREATIVE APPROACHES*

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Georg Kraev, PhD (New Bulgarian University)

Hristo Ivanov Dimitrov was born on 7th October 1969 in the city of Varna. He has lived and has finished his secondary education in the town of Shumen. He graduated in 1994 in major Choreography and Directing from the Academy of Music, Dance and Visual Arts, Plovdiv.

To a large extent the professional activity of the PhD candidate was related to the topic of the thesis, presented for defence. His professional realization so far constitutes of holding positions related to the field of choreography, performance, choreographic and directing practice, chief impresario activity and music and dance activities. He is the author and director of choreographic works, director of a number of folklore concerts, choreographic performances, etc. On 1st October 2002 in Sofia he started the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare.

Hristo Dimitrov is the organizer, co-author and leader of a number of patriotic initiatives that he has led over the years. He is the initiator and co-organizer of annual festivals and cultural traditions:

2008, International Festival of Folklore Costume in Zheravna - 2017

Annual awards in the field of dance art "Golden Muse" International Festival of Dance Art - Kranevo

2004 Creation of the Foundation BULGARE

2005 Founder of the National Movement "Second Bulgarian Revival"

2015 "Association of Choreographers in Bulgaria"

2019 Started the National Television "BULGARE" is launched, etc.

For all these activities and initiatives he received a number of prestigious awards and honours:

2014 - Honorary badge "Golden Century" and diploma from the Ministry of Culture for his contribution to the development of Bulgarian culture, on the occasion of 24 May

2015 – Honorary Citizen of the town of Kotel

2017 – Honorary plaque "St. St. Cyril and Methodius"

2017 – Honorary Citizen of the town of Shumen

2019 – Honorary Badge of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria

2020 – Order of St. St. Cyril and Methodius - first degree and many others.

RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDIED THESIS THEME

The thesis that was submitted to me for review is dedicated to the study of an issue of unquestioned importance for contemporary Bulgarian choreography. In the age of the internet and of rapid technological changes, the so-called folklore ensembles and formations are in a state of constant adaptation and search for sustainable development options to the background of a competitive environment. The need to build an image and reputation i.e. the quality of the artistic products and their successful launching using the latest approaches to name recognition, including

approaches linked to social commitment and responsibility, all this becomes increasingly valid for the folklore ensembles.

In the process of the progressive development and professionalization of Bulgarian folk dancing, through creating choreographic art on a folk basis, to the fore of the author's attention a significant goal was brought: quote – *to 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.*

This, in general, is the object of survey in the proposed thesis, with the specific selection and example of a model for the functioning of a private professional folklore ensemble in a market environment being the current state of management and artistic-creative work and production in the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare.

Content of the thesis

The thesis consists of 232 standard pages and is structured into an Introduction (5 pages), a thesis body of three chapters (137 pages), a conclusion (3 pages), references (9 pages) and 4 annexes (165 pages). The references used by the author amount to 220 sources. The **introduction** is brief but informative enough and directs the reader to the problems of the survey, to its significance, relevance and the author's motivation for carrying it.

The set 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*, is clearly and logically stated in the text. The main tasks are multifaceted, and their carrying allows achieving comprehensiveness and completeness in the survey. The set research tasks outline the theme from *historical information about the origin and development of Bulgarian professional folk dance art*, brief historical notes about the first professional folk ensembles, management, financing, repertoire and concert activity of the professional folk ensembles, through managerial approaches in the creation of a private folk ensemble, to basic artistic approaches in the creation of a contemporary folk dance performance.

The methods of scientific survey in this thesis are appropriate and suitable for the drafting of the doctoral thesis and for the accomplishment of the set tasks.

Chapter 1 entitled "*Historic overview of the origin and the development of Bulgarian professional folk dance art*" is brief, covering 20 pages. Here the functioning of the folk ensembles during the centrally planned economy until 1992 is analysed. The state model of management of professional folk art is examined, and its positive and negative impacts on the management of the folk ensembles are outlined.

The main tasks and functions of the National Centre for Music and Dance as an element of the state cultural policy in the field of music and dance art after 1993 are analysed.

In the conclusion of this chapter, based on the carried review and analysis and referring to his own experience, the author sums up: *gradually some factors were accumulated, that prepared historically, organizationally (management) and in terms of production the emergence of the projects that were implemented by the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare.*

Chapter 2 is entitled: "*The Creation of the First Private National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare. Managerial approaches.*"

Here the text provides the definition of the term *private professional folklore ensemble*. The chapter examines issues, related to the structure and the management of the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare, the methodology for training the professional performers of Bulgarian folk dances in the NFE Bulgare, the management and the selection of the personnel. The structure of the ensemble is presented in a table with a description of the ways, approaches and managerial decisions concerning each department - the functioning of the management, the work of the artistic director and of the performers, the administrative department, the Artistic activity department, the PR and Advertising department, the Sponsorship and commercial department. In a separate paragraph, presented and analysed are all the components of the *methods for training professional Bulgarian folk dance performers in NFE Bulgare* (rehearsals, rehearsal time, concentration, acting, physical and mental training).

The goal is rightly formulated with a view of verifying the author's working hypothesis. The tasks set follow logically from the stated goal. The subject and the object of the study are correctly fixed and selected. The organization of the activity is structured in three paragraphs and a complex methodology is applied solving the tasks of the research.

In Chapter 3 - "Basic creative approaches in creating a contemporary folk dance performance", firstly, on the basis of the analyzed data from the conducted surveys and of the results under the first two chapters, the PhD candidate, stepping on his personal experience, presents his own artistic principles in the modelling and creation of an artistic production, carried by the NFE Bulgare in the cultural setting of our country. A special place is given to the idea, the script plan and the sound recordings. The narrative analyzes choreography creation, the artistry work of the choreographer and the methodology of staging and goes on analyzing the special effects, the creation of the set and props for the choreographic performance.

Secondly, along with the developed examples of transforming the traditional Bulgarian folklore into a contemporary dance art, a whole director's plan and script of the performance *The Eighth Miracle* is presented as a conceptual model of a carried artistic recreation of specific fragments of the traditional Bulgarian folklore. The purpose of the model is to serve as a basis for improving the overall strategy for organizing and creating a *dancing performance* as a specific type of a product.

Thirdly, the relations between the semantic aspects of the performance *The Eighth Wonder* are examined, in the context of the director's plan and of the contemporary folk art as a means of reviving the Bulgarian spirit and culture.

Finally, I would like to stress that the data of the conducted scientific survey and the proposed methodology are adequately presented and illustrated; they are further supported by a treatment granting accuracy, validity and reliability of the obtained results that are used for a multifaceted analysis. The analysis is consistent and presents clearly the results the application of the scientific research entails and which fully support the author's working hypothesis.

The thesis outline is adequate to the content and structure of the thesis and presents clearly and in a structured way its main drive, specificity, conclusions and contributions.

For the purpose of this defence, **three scientific publications** related to the theme and issues developed in the thesis are presented.

All this gives reasons to the author, in the conclusion, to formulate and claim 6 scientific and applied contributions of his. The contributions are rightly formulated and follow logically from the solved problems.

Criticisms and disagreements can be addressed to any thesis, including this one. The inaccuracies and errors committed however, are of a minor nature and do not detract from the overall impression. Here I would recommend to Hristo Dimitrov the following:

First: *To thoroughly analyze the attached interviews of well-known and professional choreographers and managers of ensembles in Bulgaria, to make the respective generalizations and conclusions, and be the base for future research and practical applications.*

Second: *To sum-up and draft a number of recommendations with practical orientation, whose possible future implementation would have a positive impact on the quality of management of the folklore ensembles in a competitive environment.*

My question to Hristo Dimitrov is: **"What are the most common challenges and errors in the management of a private folklore ensemble?"**

In general, the thesis meets the requirements for this kind of a scientific research, and its author demonstrates knowledge of the areas that constitute the subject of his study. I would describe the thesis as an insider's glance towards a specific stage of this choreographic activity and practice, which is very important.

In conclusion, based on the merits of the thesis and on its undeniable contributions, I, with self-assurance, propose to the esteemed jury to award to Hristo Dimitrov the PhD educational and scientific degree, professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art.

Signature

Prof. Nikolay Tzvetkov

9.10.2022