

REVIEW

By Associate Professor Tatiana Sokolova, New Bulgarian University,

for the dissertation of Kristina Merdzhanova

full-time PhD student, with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Anna Pam Pulova

on the topic:

"PRACTICAL APPLICABILITY OF DANCE THERAPY IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN"

for the award of the educational and scientific degree "PhD"

D. in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art

Biographical data

Kristina Dimitrova Merdzhanova

Education

90 Secondary School, Sofia

National Vocational School of Polygraphy and Photography, Sofia

New Bulgarian University, Theatre Department - Dance Theatre Program, Sofia (BA)

New Bulgarian University, Music Department - speciality: "Music and Dance", choreographer of contemporary dance, Master's degree

Specialisations and workshops

2023, Sofia, workshop with Milos Isailovic, Serbia and Charise Renouf, 2023, April, Plovdiv, Emanuela Campiciano and Gino Labate - Barcelona Ballet Project-Spain, 2022, April, Sofia, workshop with Jean-Philippe Durie, France, 2021 workshop by Ateneo della Danza, for training in Siena, Italy, 2019, December, Emanuela Campiciano and Gino Labate - Barcelona Ballet Project-Spain, 2011, month of May, Momchil Mladenov, American Ballet for Bulgaria, 2006, September 11-14, Juri Konjar - Slovenia, 2006, Matei Kežar - Slovenia, 2005, Dalija Acin, Serbia and Montenegro, 2005, Alexandra Janeva, Croatia and Belgiu, 2005, workshop Elisaveta Yordanova, 30-31. 10.2004, seminar Kristian Bakalov, France, 28.09-01.10. 2004 for dancers led by Bob Eason, American choreographer on improvisation and company "Dune", Burgas, 2004, for professional dancers led by dance company "LINGA" - Switzerland, 2003, for professional dancers led by Finn Walker - United Kingdom, 2002, for dancers and actors led by Barry Edwards – England

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE PERFORMANCES

April, 2015 "20 Steps" - choreographed duet included in a performance celebrating 20 years of contemporary dance in Bulgaria

2004 "They Told Him" - choreographed by Tatiana Sokolova and Rosen Mikhailov, Theatre "Behind the Canal" , International Festival in Burgas, Theatre "Adriana Budevskia"

2003 "The Unsown Field" - choreographer: Elisaveta Yordanova, NPC Hall 2

2003 "Let's Talk About Love" - concert-performance, NPC Hall 2

2002 "Petya, Sonya and Lydia", choreographer: Galina Borisova, Theatre "Tear and Laughter", participation in Burgas and Varna International Dance Festivals

2001 "In the Moon Room" - directed by Vazkresia Viharova, NPC

Professional performances in sport dance competitions, honorary diplomas in international and national dance competitions.

Contents of the dissertation

The structure of the thesis consists of: introduction, four chapters and conclusion - 204 pages in total. **INTRODUCTION, Part I - Concepts of authentic motion . Part Two - DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY (DMT)**

and types of therapies. **Part Three** - A project on the practical applicability of dance therapy in working with children. **Fourth hour - DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY (DMT)** and development and now . Conclusion, dissertation contributions, and , sources used , appendix, photographs.

Accurately formulated aims and objectives of the dissertation

In this thesis Merdzhanova considers dance, not as a means of creating an artistic image, but as a way of achieving harmony between the body and the mind. It traces the relationship between Dance Therapy and Psychomatics , the interplay between behaviour, illness and physical ailments. Dance Therapy and its methods are explored as a means of assisting in working with the elderly and children. The usefulness and importance of movement, in particular Authentic Movement, is highlighted. Information is given on centers where these methods are being applied and practiced today. The relationship between breathing practices, relaxation, music therapy, their influence in various disease problems and the extent to which they would aid the healing process in the person.

The aim and objectives of this dissertation are to explore and analyze the usefulness and necessity of dance therapy by presenting a variety of research by scholars, psychologists, and therapists and to put what has been learned into practice. **The subject of the study** is the different dance movements in dance therapy, and their implementation through specific techniques of spirit and thought, which could be a means of personal self-improvement. **The object of study** is dance therapy. Applying it, we analyze and know ourselves, self-heal our body and soul.

The PhD student sets **the main research tasks** and theoretical trends in the presented topic. She draws on her practice in working with children as well as being a choreographer and dance group leader.

The history of dance therapy from its inception to the present day is traced through the eyes of renowned psychologists, scientists, and choreographers for the need of the dissertation.

Presents a variety of information from various articles, books, publications to enrich the knowledge and development of dance therapy in our country, which is part of the evidence of the usefulness of the research work.

Describes and analyses different perspectives, knowledge, findings of scholars, psychologists and professionals in the field of dance therapy.

Provides information about some of the centers that offer various specialized trainings in dance therapy.

Provide specific tasks and improvisational methods in working with children that can demonstrate overcoming problems in: communication, expression of needs, feelings, information about object relations, development, super ego, defense mechanisms, dynamics and personality analysis. The tasks set to the children will explore whether dance therapy helps and what the benefits are.

Significance of the research problem in scientific and applied terms

Merdzhanova has focused on the benefits of Dance Therapy at a particular age in children (between 11 and 17 years). The topic of the dissertation in depth has the potential for a larger study - in other group of people with different needs and age. Dance therapy has not been described extensively as a specific area that has been studied in Bulgaria due to its limited dissemination and practice in Bulgaria. Cases of relationship and communication difficulties, problems in people who have suffered serious trauma, are a large part of the therapeutic work done in any kind of therapeutic situation. People's lives are becoming more and more unnatural, only analysis and a return to a more relaxed and healthy way of life can help people survive in this fast-paced, dynamic and increasingly poisonous world. This dissertation will be useful for professionals who are involved in dance, as well as for psychologists and educators in their work with children and other social communities.

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

In the first chapter of the dissertation a brief historical review of world names from the scientific environment who developed the foundations of Dance Therapy - Mary Starks, Whitehouse Joan Chodorow. Rudolf von Laban . Here are presented concepts of authentic movement, and in fact what IS authentic movement . The "seven sources of movement" - movements coming from the primal unconscious. It proposes to distinguish five sources of impulses in Authentic Movement. Also presented is information on the collaborative work of these personalities. The classification of movement sources is the result of the development of Laban's system to reflect the ways in which movement patterns develop in a developmental context. **The Kestenberg Movement Profile-KMP**, a movement observation and analysis system used to assess individuals of all ages, including the fetus.

In Chapter Two , the dissertation focuses on the nature of Dance Therapy, types of therapies and methods of application. Here we see the designation of different processes for its application: through Authentic Movement, Improvisation, formulation of choreographic vocabulary, defines therapy as dance movement, as the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance for emotional, cognitive, social, behavioral and physical awareness.

Chapter three is the main chapter of the dissertation we are examining. It is concerned with the practical applicability of dance therapy in working with children. This is the part that Merdzhanova develops exclusively through her experience in teaching and choreography.

Improvisational methods when working with children in a play version is a useful way of perceiving dance. Besides certain techniques, movements and exercises, they learn that dance is much more than that, it is vast and endless. This includes exploring the practicality, aims, methods and benefits of setting tasks to children at different ages. For this particular therapy, Merdzhanova develops her own arrangement and systematization of movements, which are a kind of "dance exercise" of 11 movement tasks.

Correctness in quoting a representative number of authors

Kristina Merdzhanova is correct in her citations. She uses an extensive bibliography and siteography. This dissertation is interesting and very useful. It should be accessible to a wider range of practitioners of body movement. It is a theoretical and practical textbook.

Contributions of the thesis

I would present the contributions of this dissertation as follows:

The dissertation traces the history of dance therapy without being detailed and elaborate, but analyzing the opinions of different psychologists, psychiatrists and movement therapists, which is important for the region and Bulgaria.

The diverse information presented from various articles, books, and publications to enrich the knowledge and development of dance therapy in our country will be important for further research and scholarship, as well as for practitioners in the field. The work can serve as a basis for future books and manuals on child psychology and development for teachers, parents and amateurs.

The doctoral student has described and analyzed various perspectives, knowledge, and findings of scholars, psychologists, and practitioners in the field of dance therapy. The work can enrich students' knowledge of psychology, semiotics, communication, linguistics, creative arts therapies, kinesiology, dance, drama and child development.

The study provides information on some of the centres that offer different specialised training. It shares literature used and links that the interested person can refer to for further information and search or find articles, books and new research in the field of dance therapy.

The research can serve educators and dance choreographers and therapists in kindergartens, schools (for integrating children with SEN and in teamwork), various courses and self-help groups, team building, health centers, etc. The tasks described in the work (Chapter III) can be used to analyse problems and overcome them in: communication, expression of needs, feelings, information about object relations, development, super ego, defence mechanisms, dynamics and personality analysis.

I find the applications particularly useful. They are a major practical contribution of the dissertation. The research demonstrates the importance of movement. The scientific findings and the frames set by the research can serve for further developments in practice related fields and life extension research.

The bibliography is an extremely important part of the study, given the lack of literature on the topic in Bulgaria. It can be a starting point for further research and practical work.

Assessment of the relevance of the abstract to the main points and contributions of the thesis.

The abstract corresponds to the thesis.

Personal qualities of the author (if known to the reviewer)

I know Kristina Merjarova as my student and have followed her development as a choreographer and her work as a dance group leader. I define her as a very curious creative young person, with all the qualities to develop successfully in the scientific and practical field of dance.

I will conclude this REVIEW with the following assessment:

The activity of the PhD student meets the scientific-metric indicators for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", according to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria. The dissertation work of **Kristina Dimitrova Merdzharova PRACTICAL APPLICABILITY OF DANCE THERAPY IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN**, together with its contributions of scientific and applied qualities, as well as the publications on the subject, I consider fully sufficient to give my convincing positive assessment and to propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the degree of **Doctor of Education and Science** in the professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art to

Kristina Dimitrova Merjarova, according to the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Sofia 06.06.2024

Assoc.Prof. Tatiana Sokolova