

## **REVIEW**

**by Prof. Dr. Svetla Kaludova-Stanilova**

According to the procedure for occupying the academic position "professor" in the sphere of 8. Arts, professional field 8.3. Musical and dance art (conducting, composition, musical folklore), announced in SG no. 44 of 14.06. 2022). Candidate for the competition is Associate Professor Dr. Georgi Metev Petkov.

In the competition announced by the NBU, Faculty of FDECE, Music Department for the academic position "professor" in the sphere of 8. Arts, professional field 8.3. Musical and dance art (conducting, composition, musical folklore), a single candidate participated - Associate Professor Dr. Georgi Metev Petkov. The documentation presented by him is in accordance with all the necessary requirements from the ADASRB (Act of Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria) for occupying the academic position of "professor". The habilitation materials in a complete set contain comprehensive and correct information about the candidate's research, composition, artistic and teaching-methodical activities. The submitted materials correspond to the scientific specialty for which the competition was announced. They are the basis for my assessment as a reviewer. No plagiarism was found when reviewing the submitted materials.

### **Presentation of the candidate:**

Associate Professor Dr. Georgi Metev Petkov completed his secondary education with a major in tambura at SMS in the city of Kotel (today NSFA "Filip Kutev"). He received a master's degree at the Academy of Music, Dance and Visual Arts - the city of Plovdiv, majoring in " Leader of folk ensembles". His professional career began in 1986 as conductor of the orchestra at PFE (Professional Folk Ensemble) "Dobrudja" - Dobrich, continued as chief conductor of PFE "Gabrovo" and conductor of the orchestra of the National Folk Ensemble "Filip Kutev". Since 1999 his conducting work is oriented towards choral ensembles. He leads the famous female choir "Bulgarian Voices - The Angels" and founded the student mixed choir "Folk-jazz formation" at NBU (2002) and the National Choir at NMS (National Music School) "Lyubomir Pipkov", as well as the vocal trio "Euridika". Concert appearances in his conducting biography are numerous in our country and abroad. Since 1995 Associate Professor Dr. Petkov cooperates with the Bulgarian

National Radio as a composer and arranger. His work as a composer is realized in a variety of creative roles - choral and solo songs, pieces for a folk orchestra, folklore processing, arrangements and orchestrations, music for performances and dance productions, film music, etc. A significant part of his work is also occupied by teaching activities. Since 1998 he is an associate professor at New Bulgarian University, Department of Music, as well as a teacher at Lubomir Pipkov National Music School. He actively participates in projects, creative meetings, seminars, etc. Associate Professor Dr. Petkov develops active charitable and public activities and enjoys recognition. For high artistic achievements, he is a winner of several prestigious personal awards.

The reference submitted by the candidate for his scient-metric indicators and the attached evidentiary material show that the general state requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor" are sufficiently fulfilled, covering equally several types of activities - scientific research, artistic-creative, compositional, and teaching-methodical.

#### **Scientific research and artistic creative activity:**

The candidate's participation in scientific forums, projects and publications is numerous, but a significant place is devoted to the defended dissertation work titled: *"Scat technique in the work of Bulgarian composers for folk ensembles"*. Petkov's creative maturity, his vast experience as a musician-instrumentalist, choir conductor, composer and teacher led him to the need to explore a specific vocal-performance practice, such as scat singing. Based on achievements in the field of popular and jazz music, he successfully focused his attention on the application of "instrumental singing" in the music-folk performance practice in our country. The rich experience he gained as a conductor of various folk choir formations gives him the cause to show himself as a great connoisseur of the vocal performance technique of folk singers. He looks for the connection with the improvisation, the variation, and the recitative – strongly represented in our folklore tradition, and their application in artistic creativity. This determines the direction for the stylistic formation's characteristics in his subsequent choral works, according to the performance capabilities of the polyphonic formations he leads. The discussed issue has not been studied in our musicology and performing practice.

The central research result of the presented habilitation materials combined with the artistic creative activity is the habilitation thesis entitled "A Series of International Projects, Concerts and Music Albums". The arrangement of the song "Cantar Del Alma" for Enrique Morente and the

Bulgarian-Spanish musical project "Estruna" combine elements of Bulgarian folk songs and "flamenco". When creating them, the author goes into details of the problems in both musical traditions and realizes works with a strong personal composer presence and high artistic value. Its main goal is: *"to present compositional and conducting issues related to the Bulgarian-Spanish musical dialogue and works of which I am the author, and which have relevant contributions to the popularization of Bulgarian folklore abroad"* (p. 7). In this combination of music from the two ethno-cultures, Petkov unfolds his imagination and potential as a creator - composer, conductor, arranger, and choirmaster. Despite the challenges with the metro-rhythmic pulsation, the experiments, the "surprises" in the concert performance and the preconceived notion of the artistic realization, elements of improvisation emerge in the works, caused by the lack of notation (scores) in "flamenco". All this leads to full deployment of the creative initiative of the conductor and performers.

At the same time, Assoc. Prof. Petkov's scientific and artistic creative aspirations reflect his lasting interest and dedication to the problems related to choral singing and scat performance technique. The main connecting thread in the works is the application of *"folk scat"* as a means of expression, combining selected Bulgarian folk themes with jazz elements of various ethnic cultures, as a part of the world music. In these projects and in all his international *"hybrid genre"* appearances (as he terms them), he adheres to the deep layers of the folk tradition. He mainly presents himself as a composer in arrangements of instrumental and vocal themes. In them he applies specific means of expression regarding the construction of the musical form and texture. Conforming above all to the dissonant harmonic language characteristic of "flamenco", he applies polyrhythm, polytempo, looks for a characteristic timbre coloration in the performing technique of the singers in combination with the improvisational motifs in *"flamenco"* bilingually. Thus Petkov achieves sound colors in the so-called from him *"intervocal phonation"*, related to the phonetics of language systems and the timbre imitation of different voices moving from one traditional sound environment to another. The presented projects in a combination of Bulgarian and Spanish traditional musical culture are author's compositions of the candidate. His numerous appearances on world stages with the choral formations he leads contribute to the high appreciation received and subsequent participation in other international projects.

In the Bulgarian-Cuban project "Beyond the notes", including several typical Cuban Latin-jazz instrumental pieces, Assoc. Prof. Petkov expresses his creative charge to select and combine

Bulgarian intonations from the traditional samples of Thrace, Rhodope, Pirin and "Shopi" region with Cuban Latin-jazz, close in rhythm and in unison to Cuban rumba. Since the project is done under difficult communicative conditions, (in the pandemic year 2020) the composer initially experimented with parsimonious means of expression, sticking to Bourdon diphthongs and back vocals. Enrichment of the polyphonic texture is done *"on the fly"* by improvisation, changing the metro-rhythm, to fully preserve the specific stylistic sound and correct prosody. He also looks for the application of specific compositional means in the dramaturgy of the songs, corresponding to the rhythm and musical phrase in Cuban music. Some of his song samples serve as a "framework" in the construction of the musical form. Inevitably, in the process, he adds *"a few passages vocalized by stingray singing"*. (p. 35)

In the next piece "Dine", the author has an aspiration variationally to get closer to jazz harmony with a rhythm close to "Bossa Nova". He searches for suitable motifs and once again includes stingray singing. *"I continued to think instrumentally with the intention of realizing instrumental musical ideas through the means of vocal performance. It was these instrumentally invented variations that led me to the idea of the `Shop`s` song "Zaspalo e Dine" in its traditional version with the typical diaphonic and `Shopi`s` ornaments."* (p.37). This Bulgarian-Cuban project was also presented in France with the "New Bulgarian Voices" choir, about which the Jazz Plus website says: *"Here, Bulgarian folklore breathes in the fire of Cuban jazz and flows into a new, fascinating pulsation. Because music is a universal language that helps us discover ourselves in the world of beauty"*. (39)

The presented music albums and author's concert confirm the goals of Assoc. Prof. Petkov *"to show Bulgarian musical folklore and its development internationally, as well as the artistic and creative prosperity from traditional performances to avant-garde contemporary author's compositions based on folklore."* (p.47) The performed repertoire makes an impression with a predominance of author's compositions with improvisational elements. Aleatory and sonorous means of expression are visible in them, creating theatricality in the performance. The folk chants used - citations from various music-folklore fields, complete the sound emission with specific intonations and specific vocal grasps and techniques, sound avant-garde and non-standard.

His author's concert on the 10th anniversary of the University Choir "Folk-Jazz Formation" of NBU made a significant contribution to the works of Assoc. Prof. Petkov as a composer and conductor. Here, the author's contribution is not only expressed in the music he created, but also

in his manifestation as a connoisseur of vocal art and choral technique, as an inspirer of young talents for their inclusion in folk art and raising the image of the educational institution. The initiation of two new vocal ensembles is also worthy of recognition: Vocal Trio "*Euridika*" and Chamber Folklore Choir of NBU with more than 150 concerts, winners of numerous prestigious awards from our and international competitions and performances.

### **Composer activity:**

As a composer and innovator in the approach to folklore samples, Associate Professor Petkov accepts the folk song tradition as a solid foundation for the development of professional musical creativity. In his works, he reaches a synthesis of musical, socio-cultural, and educational prerequisites for the development of folk traditional music. As a connoisseur of folklore material, he penetrates deeply and analytically into the regional specifics, using local vocal grasps and techniques. In many of the arrangements, he managed to convey the imagery necessary to build the musical image, in relation to the regional characteristic. All this is in accordance with the vocal comfort, the tessitura and the possibilities of the voices. Language, meaningful, sincere, logical, accessible and exciting, innovative role model for many young followers.

### **Educational and methodological activity:**

The teaching-methodical activity of Associate Professor Dr. Petkov is versatile and fruitful. He is a long-time teacher at NBU in music-theoretical and practical disciplines related to musical folklore, creator and conductor of the University Mixed Choir "*Folk-Jazz Formation*". At the same time, he teaches vocal ensembles and directs a folk choir at NMS "Lyubomir Pipkov" - Sofia. His graduates are also participants in the vocal trio "Euridika". For students, the tool he developed is intended: "Folk-jazz-scat" choral songs. His restless spirit as a teacher and inspirer of young talents is also manifested in the realized Master classes, workshop, creative studios, etc.

In citations and reviews, the applicant provides evidence of two citations and six reviews. The analysis of the attached materials to the habilitation certificate proves that, along with the scientific and artistic creative, compositional, and teaching-methodical activities of Associate Prof. Dr. Georgi Petkov, are his strengths.

All sections of the habilitation work end with practical-applied contributions, which is very valuable. In the overall presentation of the work, the author shows a desire to demonstrate his own,

personal research handwriting. I believe that the work has high practical and applied qualities. It also has its own scientific contribution to the development of Bulgarian folk music. The folk song is the main product of aesthetic needs, as an important "*type of cultural communication*". A large amount of evidentiary material is attached.

### **Conclusion**

The submitted habilitation materials of the candidate in the current procedure do not contradict the requirements of the LDASRB (Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in republic of Bulgaria) and the regulations for its implementation. They show a high contribution meaning to the enrichment and development of Bulgarian folklore science. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petkov's achievements as a researcher, creator, teacher, and public figure are indisputable and definite. His scholarly and research activities show depth in his own research field and assertion of personal handwriting, which is very valuable. This is a reason for the candidate to receive a high rating for his overall activity. Proof of this is the fulfilled scientific-metric requirements for occupying the position of "professor", according to the table of RILDASRB (Rules for Implementation of Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in republic of Bulgaria) in scientific field 8. Arts, professional range 8.3 Music and dance art.

Based on the stated arguments, I give a high and positive assessment to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Petkov, as a candidate in the competition. I recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to award Associate Professor Georgi Metev Petkov with the academic position of "Professor" in Professional Field 8.3. Musical and dance art (conducting, composition, musical folklore).

Plovdiv

11<sup>th</sup> October 2022

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/AMDVA "Prof. Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv/