

## OPINION

By Prof. Veneta Doycheva, PhD, NATFA "Karstyo Sarafov", Sofia,

scientific direction 8.4 Theatre and Film Art

on the scientific/ artistic and creative works for participation in a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in professional direction 8.4 Theatre and Film Art, as announced

in SG no. 50/01.07.2022,

with candidate Ch. Assistant Prof. Antoaneta Hristova Petrova, PhD

The submitted papers evidence that the candidacy is in accordance with the minimum requirements under the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and the requirements of New Bulgarian University, therefore it can be discussed in substance.

Antoaneta Petrova is an artist who has a place in the Bulgarian theatrical life. Her CV abounds in roles played, projects implemented and accomplishments in a wide range of theatrical activities. She is an actress with unique artistic power, own acting style and presence, infectious with a forthright personal attitude to the dramatic form. It is probably no coincidence that in her pedagogical work she turns to that aspect of the figure of the actor, i.e. the actor's inextricable connection with the personality, with the authenticity of the individuality and with the freedom to partner not only within the framework of the stage, but within that of the audience too. It is important to emphasize that Antoaneta Petrova has an impressive career path and a very broad educational background (pedagogy, cultural studies and acting). After dedicating herself to the theatre and theatre pedagogy, she manages to assert herself by drawing from all areas of her training.

The most important contribution of the paper she defends is her own structured method of training acting students in the field of improvisation. The presented work, entitled *Improvisation and Play in the Training and Practice of the Actor* is the fruit of her systematic efforts with students and is essentially a synthesized practical guide. The author combines her academic training with the conscious need to adapt different approaches to the actor and to devise strategies for introducing students to the freedom of game reactivity. The second important goal of her method is blending theatre play into various alternative activities with a significant social charge. Theatre is a means

of effective assistance in psychological rehabilitation activities, overcoming traumatic experiences and supporting educational tasks. The clarification of this approach is consistent in the research work and it steps on several basic understandings of the figure of the actor and his/her path to the stage image. The classic theories of K. Stanislavsky, B. Brecht, J. Grotovsky, P. Brook, L. Strasberg, M. Chekhov, E. Barba are indicated here. Concisely, and by deriving the core of these ideas, the author argues that updating one's experience is the first step towards new practices. The central part of the study focuses on the work in the PHONOPTIKFORM programme, the project *Reticently Told - Your Story(you) in Me*, performances built as Playback - ritual, the techniques of improvisational theatre, the educational project *Learning through play*. Here, the author soberly and calmly examines the path, sparing nothing of the difficulties and always arriving at a working solution. In these pages there is both a description of the type, the theatre that is practiced, and specific programmes (exercises, scenario schemes, reconstructions of the work process). The study makes a useful professional read of applied research nature. It summarizes years of work and experience while remaining open to new directions. This author's study proves that the candidate possesses profound erudition, has accumulated a wealth of experience and demonstrates that she can offer successful educational approaches.

Her achievements in versatile pedagogical projects and programmes have been widely confirmed through the ensuing documentaries: *I Learn by Playing* directed by Pavel Vesnakov with the participation of students from the William Gladstone 18th secondary school and *Learning through Play*, on the same topic but directed by Yuliana Kirova and Gabriel Stoychev with the participation of students from the Theatre Department to NBU, as well as students from Aleko Konstantinov 28th secondary school.

In addition to being a proven teacher, Antoaneta Petrova is also an actively performing actress with a long list of parts played on various stages. She is an artist who has mastered the most complex aspects of the theatrical game and through her own work proves that her academic thoroughness as a researcher finds confirmation of a possible realization in her person. A special highlight are the solo shows *Diary of a Madman*, *Infanticide*, *On the Edge*, which brilliantly illustrate her acting talent. A combination of frank confession, reactivity and authenticity of presence are the traits that bring the audience closer to its characters. Among her significant roles, which she has chosen to include in her CV are both dramaturgy of the classical type (Ibsen, Lorca) and traditional forms (the classic *Epic of Gilgamesh*), but also contemporary texts (Zdrava

Kamenova, Ioana Mircheva), as well as documentaries. She has worked with distinguished directors (Vazkresia Viharova, Elena Panayotova, Delyana Maneva, Gergana Dimitrova). All performances are on renowned stages (NDK, Toplotsentrala) and on the stage of the UT of NBU. Her experience in the cinema is distinguished too (besides the cited documentaries based on her idea and with her participation, she has also starred in feature and television productions).

Antoaneta Petrova is the author of the monograph *An Egyptian Tale of the Heart*, ed. NBU.

Antoaneta Petrova's teaching activity is related to the theatre department at NBU and where she started teaching in 2000. After a successful doctorate, she has held various positions: chief assistant, Director of the Master's Programme "Theatre Directing in the European Context", Director of the Programme Board in the Theatre Department of NBU. Her teaching activity is related to the courses "The actor in a team"; "I as a role. Theatre games for non-actors"; "Theatrical Forms"; "Basic elements of acting psychotechnique"; "Dynamics of theatrical form"; "Improvisational and play theatre"; "Morphology of theatrical form"; "Interdisciplinary project" and others. Antoaneta Petrova manages student internships and practices, prepares events, etc. She took part in the setup of the Theatre bachelor's programme commencing in 2018/2019. Her teaching activity is continuous, her workload includes major courses. She has been part of successful defenses and graduations of numerous students. It is clear that the recognition of students and colleagues is high and supported by the highest attestation score. She is an active Erasmus coordinator. In 2017/2018, she was the director of the Programme Board of the Theatre Department.

The candidate demonstrates active participation in a variety of projects and initiatives. The educational programmes initiated by her have already been mentioned, as well as the practical lessons conducted in various schools, in which students teach topics of various subjects to students of different ages using theatrical means. Her name has attracted funding under various donor programmes (Ministry of Culture, Sofia Metropolitan Municipality).

Based on all the documents provided and my rich personal impressions of the professional and creative performance of Antoaneta Petrova, I vote YES in the competition for the academic position of ASSISTANT PROFESSOR.

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