

OPINION

By Prof. Svetla Yordanova Hristova, NBU

Professional Field 8.4. *Theatre and Film Art*

On the academic papers presented for the contest for awarding the academic degree Associate Professor in professional field 8.4. *Theatre and Film Art*, as announced in SG 50/01.07.2022,
Candidate: Ch. Asst. Prof. Antoneta Hristova Petrova, PhD, NBU

The materials presented for the competition, as well as the candidate's creative work and her work as a lecturer fully comply with the requirements set in the *Implementing Rules of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act* and the requirements of NBU for awarding the academic position *Associate Professor*. In some of the groups of indicators set out in the Act, the candidate, Ch. Asst. Prof. Antoneta Petrova, has gained even more points than those required.

In 2012 Antoaneta Petrova defended her dissertation work *The Non-literary Theatre – Performance Practices, Specific Features and Development*, and at present, she is a Chief Assistant Professor, and PhD with NBU. As the abovementioned Act stipulates, in the field of arts, it is possible for the candidate, having been awarded the academic title Doctor, to present their creative works rather than theoretical papers and publications, at a contest for awarding an academic position. In the case hereby the candidate has an impressive professional experience consisting of an array of participations in NBU's innovative projects (in addition to her individual acting roles in a multitude of films, shows and theatre plays) and her experience as a tutor, is in fact a constant and continued involvement in the development of modern theatrical practices in the recent years. The acting roles of the candidate, included in the application portfolio for the Associate Professor contest, have been presented before a wider general audience after the candidate has been awarded the academic position Chief Assistant Professor at NBU. All these circumstances pave the way for her present habilitation. The extended abstract accompanying the presentation of the artistic work of the candidate, submitted for the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, is entitled *The Improvisation and the Play in an Actor's Training and Practice*, and in essence is a specific recapitulation of the candidate's extensive stage experience in a brand new tendency of contemporary theatre. The modern perception of the theatrical convention is reflected in the curriculum of the Theatre Department and in the theatrical policy of the University Theatre,

where Ch. Asst. Prof. Antoneta Petrova, PhD, realizes innovative practices in collaboration with students enrolled in the two modules – *Director* and *Actor*, as well as with students from other majors, enrolled in the modules *I As a Role – Thespian Games for Non-actors*, *Playback Theatre* and *Forum Theatre*; the candidate is also involved in a number of experiments in the field of applying game techniques and approaches in the actor training process and in realizing projects of social importance, including projects providing support for disadvantaged individuals.

Apart from being excellently structured, the abstract strikes as admirable in terms of its theoretical and practical significance and its extensive bibliography, and I do believe that it is a valuable proof, not only of the candidate's work presented for the Associate Professor contest hereby, but, at large, of the innovative modern policies applied in the actors' classes at NBU. The abstract is also an evidence of the candidate's unquestionable ability to describe and analyse the specificity of the methodology and the realisation of theatrical forms, which extend beyond the conventional perception for a play and a performance and tap into the field of interdisciplinary forms. The author is also interested in the social aspect of theatre, and is therefore involved in applying a range of techniques and strategies from the apparatus of the improvisation theatre in the projects: *Discover Theatre* and *The Untold Told – The Story of You, the You in Me*. In the abstract, the candidate summarises the contributions in her research work, her work as a practicing actor and tutor, by giving a detailed systematic account of the means of expression, the techniques and the step-by-step algorithm of Playback Theatre Performances. I hereby claim that Antoaneta Petrova, PhD, has a significant methodological contribution, realized through applying the Game Methodology for training at both the high school level (the method has been applied in seven high schools) and at academic level (in NBU) and developing a training improvisational theatre for encouraging spontaneity.

What impresses the reader in the reference section of the extended abstract are the evidences for participations in a range of radio and TV shows, the reviews in the periodical press, related to the performances described above, and it provides a clear idea about the social and cultural resonance of these performances as well as for the way they present and popularise the tuition in the NBU's Theatre Department and contribute to promoting the prestige of NBU.

Antoaneta Petrova's students have had the chance to apply their skills during the Small Season of Theatrical Laboratory *Sfumato*, at the night of the theatres in *Banya Starinna*, Plovdiv, during the International Semiotic Summer School in Sozopol, during the New and

Prospective NBU Students Campaign in Plovdiv, Assenovgrad and Sofia, as well as in a replica of the theatrical performance *The Untold Told*.

I have witnessed the beneficial influence Ch. Asst. Prof. Antoneta Petrova, PhD, in her role as a lecturer and tutor, has had on the professional creative advancement of the students in the NBU Theatre Department: Pavel Vesnakov, who chose her for the leading role in his film *Trains*, has been awarded with the JAMESON Award for a Bulgarian short film at the SOFIA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, as well as with the Award for THE BEST BULGARIAN FILM at the INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, BALCHIK. Years later, Pavel Vesnakov shot the documentary *I Learn Playing*, featuring Antoaneta Petrova, PhD, as an illustration of her methodology, both as an actor and as a tutor during a course with the students from the 18th General High School *William Gladstone*. Another documentary by our students on the same topic, *Learning by Playing*, was realized thanks to support by the directors Yuliana Kirova and Gabriel Stoychev.

The materials provided for the competition are convincing and of considerable merit, and they showcase the qualities of Ch. Asst. Prof. Antoneta Petrova, PhD, both as a tutor and as an artist with undeniable contribution to the tuition process in the NBU Theatre Department. I am convinced in the usefulness and the significance of her experience as an actor for the development of these new experimental theatre territories, in which her inexhaustible energy and consistency as a tutor have been inspiring and will continue to inspire and yield interesting results. Therefore, I, with utter conviction, propose to the esteemed academic panel to award the academic position of Associate Professor to Ch. Asst. Prof. Antoneta Petrova, PhD.

07.11.2022.

Prof. Svetla Hristova, PhD