

OPINION

About the procedure for receiving the academic position Associate Professor in Professional Field 8.4 Theatre and Film Arts, as announced in SG, issue 50/01.07.2022, candidate: Ch.

Asst. Prof. Antoaneta Hristova Petrova, PhD, NBU

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Ch. Asst. Prof. Antoaneta Petrova, PhD is among the first alumni of the BA Theatre Programme at NBU, around the mid 90's and I am well aware of a major part of her successful, fruitful and diverse artistic career: as an actress, a director, a tutor and a host of contemporary, applied and educational theatrical forms, which mainly in the last decade have begun to establish themselves in the Bulgarian theatre practice as a whole, slowly but firmly enough. Her discipline, organization and consistency in acquiring, accumulating and using her theatrical experience and skills - largely related to her professional work at the NBU, but not only there - are the ultimate result, of her true dedication to the art of theatre, which I have witnessed since her appearances as a student.

Not only does Antoaneta Petrova's self-assessment rubric meet the requirements, but the content also significantly exceeds the minimum point requirements for the Associate Professor position, and shows her extensive creative activity in both the "original products" rubric and the "short original products" rubric, as well as the "supporting creative performances" rubric; the activity presented in the table cover all the other requirements for a faculty member. In particular, her acting performances in her artistic career are really exceptional, special, and unique in the very concrete sense of those words. Here I put her performances from the very beginning at the Varna Theatre: in the production of *The Mother*, directed by St. Kambarev (the role of Lipa), in *Diary of a Madman*, etc.; later in the role of The Mother in the play *Infanticide* by P. Turini, in the solo performance *On the Edge*, or in the role of Natalia from *Three Sisters* (directed by Yulian Tabakov), the mother in the show *Good Night, Mom* (Sliven Theatre), her role in *The House of Bernarda Alba*, etc. These are all characters placed in a difficult situation, be it dramatic or tragicomic, who are desperately trying to find themselves and somehow break free, to emerge out of it. Literally put "on the edge". And it seems to be no coincidence that for some time now Petrova has been focusing on the *Playback Theatre* and its application to people in unequal positions or in difficult situations. This move of hers seems to be a further upgrade and reflection of her creative experience on stage, already beyond the purely fictional and artistic; not only creatively any more, but also rationally as an organizer, leader and director of this contemporary theatrical

form. As if she is now confronting and encountering its stage images of convulsion, despair and endangerment that already exist in life, but are now also located in another function.

The extended summary to her creative work is called

Improvisation and Play in the Actor's Training and Practice, and it is broken down through some projects and their development at NBU, such as PHONOPTICFORM, as well as through her personal experience in the organization and running of the Playback Theatre. In the first part, she discusses in sufficient detail the models of communication, playing an important role in 21st century theatre. Nowadays the actor and, in general, the thespian artist needs to master and use everything more essential than the systems of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Brecht, Grotowski, Richard Schechner, and the other significant figures of thespian theory of the last century. It draws on the famous triad of Burt O. States: The "I" model of self-expression. 2. The "You" model, i.e., of collaborating, of seeking the audience's complicity. 3. And the "He" model of the manifestation. Obviously, the first and the second one turn out to be the most appropriate and important for Antoaneta Petrova's interests, for her vision of theatre art as a mediational, therapeutic method and "the theatre as a place where the spirit is healed", according to the words of Tsvetana Maneva, under whose leadership the initiative "Discover the Theatre" at NBU was started.

Although her work generally follows the principles of Jonathan Fox's Playback Theatre, Petrova has, in fact, created her own form of its application on the basis of her acting practice and her rich professional experience in general, as well as her long, in-depth, experimental work on finding the most appropriate organization, composition, means and techniques for the realization of this theatrical form and for a more successful implementation of the process of communication and interaction with the audience. She has described in an interesting way, and quite consistently at that, the stages in the realization of the performance itself: How the actors expecting the story should behave, how they should communicate with the audience, what should be the very performance of the cast: of its actors, of its musicians (usually two, playing traditional instruments, and a conductor), and of its host (who decides how the story is chosen, how the storyteller-viewer determines the actors and roles); it is also important that the host must be able to feel the pulse of the performance to know when to close it. Stages called "kaleidoscope" and "audience mirror" complete the show. What is also described in the extended abstract is the application of Playback Theatre to its interdisciplinary forms; another contribution worth mentioning is that the text determines how the performance is developed and acted in these forms with two changing presenters, a psycho-dramatist and an actress. The various ancillary exercises are explained.

In the light of the above, I have no choice but to conclude that Antoaneta Petrova has a rich professional, applied and pedagogical practice, the latter being particularly related to the NBU, with a number of participations in festivals, conferences, workshops, public lectures, awards from competitions and national forums. All in all, with her creative and teaching activity Ch. Asst. Prof. Antoaneta Hristova Petrova fully meets the requirements for obtaining the academic position of ASSISTANT PROFESSOR and I vote for it with conviction.

Prof. Romeo Popiliev, D.A.