

## REVIEW

by Prof. DrSc Nikolay Yordanov

on: materials submitted for participation in a competition for awarding of the academic position of “Associate Professor” by Dr. Petar Kaukov

After I got acquainted with the works submitted by Dr. P. Kaukov for participation in a competition for awarding of Associate Professor academic position, namely videos of the performances of *Love and Money* by Dennis Kelly, director – Petar Kaukov, Youth Theater, 2011, and *DNA* by Dennis Kelly, director – Petar Kaukov, Virovititsa Theater and Academy for Art and Culture in Osijek – Croatia, 2019, the translations of the two plays in Bulgarian, made by Petar Kaukov, as well as with the candidate’s theoretical work “Dennis Kelly and the Criminal Daily Routine” and with the rest of the materials submitted by him in accordance to Art. 70, para. 2, related to his stage productions, publications and participations in conferences, his teaching and expert activity, and taking in account also his entire professional biography, I can conclude the following:

In his professional development, Dr. Petar Kaukov combines the qualities of a director, a pedagogue and a manager. Also, his capacity for critical and research reflection on authors, works of art, aesthetic trends and attitudes in the socio-cultural context, is clearly demonstrated. He has extensive practical experience in staging where his professional and theoretical accumulations take form.

The two performances submitted for participation in the competition – *Love and Money*, and *DNA*, by the British playwright, film and television screenwriter Dennis Kelly, show a modern reflex and sense of current problems in our time. The performances were staged at prestigious theaters – the N. Binev Youth Theater in Sofia and the Virovititsa Theater and Academy for Art and Culture in Osijek, Croatia, and in the latter case, work in international ambience should be

emphasized. They did not pass unnoticed by theater awards, festival selections and critical reviews. (The candidate has enclosed a description and supporting evidence of such distinctions.) Both performances show the ability to make out non-traditional theater script, to make the most of the available stage space and to lead the actors to develop strong characters. The latter is worth emphasizing, because in D. Kelly's dramaturgy the characters are presented only in a fragmentary way - through sketchy speeches and separate expressive reactions. By the way, Peter Kaukov's involvement with this author is also clear by the fact that he is the translator of both plays from English to Bulgarian.

In the theoretical development work of the candidate, these impressions about his staging are confirmed proving at the same time his analytical abilities and broad theatrical and literary culture. He managed to summarize not only the theater scripts of Dennis Kelly, but also of the entire wave of British playwrights from the 1990's and the beginning of 21-st century, known as in-yer-face theatre, while reducing them to three types of challenges in their staging: 1. How to recreate violence as “an integral part of characters' interrelations”? (p. 1); 2. How to deal with the number of rude and obscene expressions the speech of the characters abounds in?; and 3. How to construct an entire stage narrative out of the fragments of dialogue and the short segments of ongoing life in D. Kelly's scrips?

In his theoretical work, Petar Kaukov tries, first of all, to define the main conflict in the contemporary world as it is seen through Dennis Kelly's eyes. In *Love and Money*, this conflict is defined as a clash between illusions for a happy life on credit and the real society while in *DNA* it is between egoism and the drive for domination and the civilizational accumulations of the modern man. I find this to be an exact section of the main collision which swirls the flows of human energy in both the Dennis Kelly's plays. I would like particularly to note down here that to a certain extent, these conflicts are too directly brought up yet at the

dramaturgical level so the direction should have justified and conduct them through a full-blooded life taking place on the stage.

Then, it should be noted that the director deconstructed the plays very well reducing them to separate micro-units (excerpts) from which he then assembled the whole performances. In this respect, he proved to be proficient in the operative analysis of dramatic script.

With regard to the stage interpretation of the two scripts, Petar Kaukov strives to lay it between the contemporary world and the logic of ancient drama. For example, he sees the D. Kelly's characters as "anonymous heroes, modern form of Ancient Greek chorus" (p. 9); though defined by genre as black comedies, his plays are conceivable through the "Aristotelian concept of catharsis provoking *compassion and fear* in us, and *purging these feelings* through his brilliant sense of (black) humour" (p. 24). In this interpretation of his, he also draws on the existing historical and theoretical studies on contemporary British drama published in Bulgaria in the recent years.

In my opinion, the contributions of his work in the two performances and the theoretical work indicated by the candidate himself, correspond to the real achievements. First of all, through language translations, stage performances and theoretical reflections, Petar Kaukov introduces Dennis Kelly's dramaturgy simultaneously in Bulgarian and Croatian theatrical and literary contexts. And, he also presents a staging and theoretical model to read and stage not only the scripts of D. Kelly but of the whole wave of playwrights belonging to the so-called in-ner-face theater. Of course, this is not and cannot be a universal model for their interpretation, but anyway it shows one possible way for them to be understood and staged, while trying to get as close as possible to their perception of the world and to their poetics.

Petar Kaukov has demonstrated a lasting interest in British drama. He has published Shakespeare's Comedies between Eros and Tanatos monograph (2019), as well as several publications on Shakespeare's dramaturgy in prestigious editions. My natural wish to the candidate is to persist with and extend this interest in British drama through translations, staging and teaching, and through critical and theoretical developments.

Taken on the whole, Petar Kaukov's biography includes 20 years of staging experience mainly related to the Plovdiv Drama Theater and the Youth Theater, but also to productions performed in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina; teaching practice as an Assistant Professor in Theater Directing at the Kr. Sarafov National Academy for Theater and Film Arts; managerial skills, being a deputy managing director of the Drama Theater in Plovdiv and the Youth Theater, and presently – the managing director of the NATFA Training Theater. His participations in a number of international projects must also be added to these circumstances.

The evidence, presented by Petar Kaukov in accordance with Art. 70, para. 2, is convincing. My personal impressions of the candidate's professional qualities add to the credibility of the evidence provided under this competition. First of all, I would like to underline his working efficiency, responsibility and consistency he manifests in each one of his activities. He holds knowledge and skills which are achieved through his educational qualifications but at the same time they are also derived from his direct practical experience in theater directing.

These arguments give me a persuasive reason to recommend to the Honorable Commission to award him with the academic position of Associate Professor.

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