

Kr. Sarafov National Academy for Theater and Film Arts
Stage Arts Faculty

SHORT REVIEW

on

a set of scientific works by

Chief Assn. Prof. Petar Kaukov, PhD

Submitted for participation in the competition for awarding of the academic position of

Associate Professor in Drama Theater Directing

Professional Field 8.4. Theater and Film Art

(Promulgated in State Gazette, No. 85/15.10.2019)

Reviewer:

Prof. Dr. Velimir Velev

Stage Arts Faculty

NATFA

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There is only one candidate, Assn. Prof. Dr. Petar Kaukov, in the competition for Assoc. Prof. in the Professional Field 8.4. Theater and Film Art, Theater Studies and Theater Art Scientific Specialty (Directing) at NATFA, announced in the SG, issue 85 of 15th October 2019.

The candidate, Chief Assn. Dr. Petar Kaukov has a short but relatively intensive experience as a teacher in Theater Directing for students in the fields of Stage Arts Directing, Drama Theater Directing and Theater Production - exercises and lectures at NATFA (since 2018). His experience as an actor and a director (in more than 20 performances) as well as publications, participations in scientific conferences and projects and occupation of various managing positions in the theater field, are also worth noting.

The habilitation paper Dr. Kaukov applies with is substituted by two author's products that are the stage direction of plays by one and the same playwright – Dennis Kelly, respectively *Love and Money*, staged at the Nikolay Binev Youth Theater in 2011, and *DNA*, staged with the students at the Academy for Arts and Culture, Osijek, Croatia, in 2019, presenting also his translations of the plays (from English to Bulgarian) as well as a theoretical development paper on the dramaturgical specifics of the same author (Dennis Kelly).

1. *Love and Money* by Dennis Kelly, director – Petar Kaukov, set design and costumes – Rozina Makaveeva, composer – Yavor Dimitrov (Nikolay Binev Youth Theater, 2011) – a recording of the last performance of the production in 2014)

Kaukov appraises the extremely dramatic foundation of the play and deliberately abandons the search for an effective directing decision. Instead, he has chosen to rely on the development of the drama script at the actors' performing of the verbal action. The conscious choice in this direction is complemented by the challenge of the specifics of

Kelly's dialogue characterized by a high degree of literal naturalistic speech in which much of the verbal information is missing. The artistic means are frugal, completely frank presentation principle, the assembling connections are left in the way they are set in the drama, with all their technical length, using only a short backlight silhouette effect as a transition between scenes. In the presentation of a destructive plot, the focus is on the acting as well as on the message that gradually emerges as a kaleidoscopic silhouette. It is worthy of a special note.

Unlike the Kelly's drama script in which the final words "about love" by an already degraded dead woman complete the picture of society with no chance of salvation, in the Kaukov's production here things are different. Whether or not a personal need for hope has got the upper hand with the director, but the final monologue gives the viewer a sense that there is indeed something more powerful than the trap of our consumer consciousness sunk in the mire of money, material possessions and prosperity. And that sense for a final ray of light lingers on, despite the realization that after her final words, this woman is about to undergo a psychiatric treatment, to sunk in debts and therefore be killed by her own husband to whom she is now amorously saying "yes" for life.

2. *DNA* by Dennis Kelly, director – Petar Kaukov, set design and costumes - Kreshimir Tomac, composer – Milen Kukosharov (Virovitica Theater and Academy for Art and Culture in Osijek, Croatia, 2019) – recording of the first performance of the production on 7th June 2019 (in Croatian, translation – Ana Primorac).

In the approach to directing, this production has much to do with the previous one. Given also the context in which it is staged – a student cast in the training surroundings of the Academy for Art and Culture in Osijek, Kaukov the director makes his proper choice again:

Frugal means with high impact – an empty stage, acting, lighting, music. Frankly plain theater. Well-analyzed text, physical action found. Good selection of students and good allocation of roles/characters in accordance with their individual qualities. A good work of the director with the students – though with varying success levels, they handle the tasks decently to the extent that warrants the artistic availability of production and message.

In summary: The two productions show the candidate as a professional who wields the fundamentals of the craft. One of the productions is an educational work which gives also information about him as a pedagogue since such a work in an academic ambience is as directorial as it is pedagogical. As highlighted above, it shows good pedagogical work with students to achieve the necessary stage effect.

3. In addition, the translations from English to Bulgarian of the same two plays ***Love and Money*** and ***DNA*** by Dennis Kelly are presented as a part of the two productions considered. The qualities of the translations are substantial especially given the specific structural expression of the author and the stylistic features of his drama language – obscenity, authentic speech, verbal (but not semantic) incompleteness and unfinished phrases, fragmentation, etc. Kaukov not only managed to handle the idioms but in a lot of cases he found “a linguistic image” of the original thus translating not only the semantic content but also the atmosphere – the suggestion in the different degrees of tension and moods, the various “vibration” and “thrill” of each scene.

4. The candidate’s theoretical paper – ***Dennis Kelly and the Criminal Daily Routine***, show Kaukov as a good expert in Dennis Kelly’s works, both as an extension and part of British drama from the end of the old and the beginning of the new millennium. Its scope is that of a study and although unfit to be considered as a separate habilitation work of the author since it is not published (neither are the two translations), it completes the characteristics of the candidate as a director and a teacher with the definite strokes of a theoretician who is capable to rationalize and analyze a theatrical topic, structure it and develop it pedagogically to a level where it can achieve its successful practical realization.

Therefore, I conclude that his application combining theory of the stage practice with academic pedagogic work, is perfectly appropriate.

Having said all this, I find it advisable to back Dr. Petar Kaukov for his awarding of the scientific title of Associate Professor.

I vote "YES"!