

SHORT REVIEW

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for a competition for awarding the academic position of Associate Professor
in Drama Theater Directing,
professional field 8.4. „Theater and Film Art”,
with a candidate Dr. Petar Kaukov,
Chief Asst. Prof. at NATFA “Kr. Sarafov”

Over the years, I have followed the professional work of Dr. Kaukov, mainly as a director in various theaters, as well as his research work the results of which he has published in various scientific periodicals and in his monograph *Shakespeare’s Comedies Between Eros and Thanatos* (2019), nominated for the UBA 2020 Ikar Award for a critical review.

Dr. Petar Kaukov obtained a bachelor’s degree in Drama Theater Acting in 1998, and a bachelor’s degree in Drama Theater Directing at NATFA in 2000. He became a Master in Theater Directing in 2007. In 2018, he obtained the scientific degree of PhD in Theater Studies and Theater Art at NATFA. He was an Asst. Prof. in Theater Directing at NATFA from 2015 to 2019.

Dr. Kaukov has a significant activity as a manager. He has been the head of NATFA Theater since 2018. He was a deputy director of the Nikolay Binev Youth Theater and the Nikolay.O.Masalitinov Drama Theater – Plovdiv. He was a coordinator of the Stage at a Crossroads International Autumn Theater Festival. His creative activity is as an actor and a director. He has staged productions at a number of theaters in the country and abroad. He has worked as an actor at the A’part Municipal Youth Experimental Theater, at the Nikolay.O.Masalitinov Drama Theater – Plovdiv, etc. He was the author and host of the „Open Your Eyes!” morning show at the TV CHANNEL 3. It should be noted that Dr. Kaukov was the head of an artistic and creative project *Young People at the Youth*.

This extremely rich practical experience of Dr. Kaukov in the theater as a director, an actor, a manager, a translator and set designer is of great significance for both his pedagogic and research work.

Dr. Kaukov’s work as a director demonstrates his main merits. The submitted productions are related to his directing activity and cover the necessary scientometric indicators for acquiring the academic position of Associate Professor in the area of the required developments under indicator B.4. for professional field “Art”.

They are:

1. Recording of the performance “Love and Money” by Dennis Kelly, director Petar Kaukov (Nikolay Binev Youth Theater, 2011).
2. Recording of the performance “DNA” by Dennis Kelly, director Petar Kaukov.
3. Dr. Petar Kaukov’s theoretical study “Dennis Kelly and the Criminal Daily Routine”.
4. The texts of Dennis Kelly’s plays “Love and Money” and “DNA”, translated by Petar Kaukov.

Kaukov has staged performances in Bulgaria (Nikolay Binev Youth Theater; Behind the Channel Small City Theater; Metropolitan Puppet Theater; Nikolay O. Masalitinov Drama Theater, Plovdiv; Stefan Kirov Drama Theater, Sliven; Blagoevgrad Drama Theater; Kardzhali Theater and Music Center; Dimitar Dimov Drama Theater, etc.) and abroad (Virovitica Theater and Academy for Art and Culture in Osijek, Croatia; Bosnian National Theater “Zenica”, Bosnia and Herzegovina; National Theater "Steria" - Varsac, Serbia and Montenegro; Leskovac National Theater, Serbia and Montenegro, etc.).

Along with his productions of classical texts, especially by Shakespeare (“Much Ado about Nothing”; “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”; “Twelfth Night, or What You Will”), the director’s preferences are towards less known and untranslated texts by modern world playwrights (Dennis Kelly, Bernard Slade, Christopher Hampton, Peter Shaffer, Steve Martin, Thomas Bernhard, Abi Morgan, Michael Frayn, Zeljko Hubac, etc.). He has also staged several productions of Bulgarian works (“BaiGanyo” by Georgi Danailov; “For You” by Yana Borisova; “Nerves for Love” by Kiril Topalov; “A Bully” by Konstantin Katsarov, etc.). Not only the directing aspects of his staging activity should be emphasized but also the pedagogic ones which includes work with students.

His production of “Love and Money” by Dennis Kelly was distinguished with 2012 Ikar Award for supporting female role to Iskra Donova and, for supporting male role, to Stefan Mavrodiiev, which is a sign for his fruitful work as a director with the actors. Productions of his were in the selections of festivals in our country and abroad, like the Varna Summer International Theater Festival, Apollonia Arts Holidays; Sliven Theater Hall; Stage at a Crossroads International Autumn Theater Festival; Virovitica Theater Summer Festival (Virovitica, Croatia); 22nd Festival of the Professional Theaters for Children and Youth of the Croatian ASSITEJ Center, 2019 (held in Cakovec, Croatia), etc. He also participated in *Circles in the Water* workshop for young directors from Southeast Europe led by Andrey Sherban, held at the Arkush Cultural Center, Romania.

Kaukov also appears as an actor in drama theater and cinema.

Dr. Kaukov is the author of several texts in specialized publications and the aforementioned book “Shakespeare’s Comedies Between Eros and Thanatos” mainly related to Shakespeare’s work.

For the competition for the academic position of Associated Professor, Dr. Kaukov presents a theoretical study “Dennis Kelly and the Criminal Daily Routine” (27 pages) in which he highlights some key specifics of British Drama since the beginning of 21st century and shows the challenges the director and the whole team face in the creative process. This text has highly cognitive character and carries a certain practical and application charge. It singles out three problematic phenomena in modern drama in general, namely:

1. Violence – physical and/or verbal – as an integral part of the characters’ interrelations;
2. The non-normative language and the use of offensive, rude, vulgar words and expressions in the drama text;
3. The unspoken / uncompleted speech of the characters which requires “catching up” in meaning, purpose, and message through the stage behavior of the actor – facial expressions, gestures, intonation.

The author of the study stresses that the considered problematic phenomena are only additional complications to the already complex puzzle of the staging process. He claims they definitely require additional efforts on the part of the director to achieve plausible stage narrative. The director communicates that the task gets even more difficult, given the fact that the viewer could edit the drama text “on the go”.

The enclosed works (2 translations, 2 productions and a theoretical study) are scientifically applied. The following contributions are highlighted which, in my opinion, really play an important role for filling some “white spaces” in the Bulgarian theatrical culture:

1. Introducing Bulgarian and Croatian audience to the drama of Dennis Kelly as one of the world-famous British authors in the new century;
2. Translations of Dennis Kelly’s plays in Bulgarian and commissioned translation into Serbo-Croatian.
3. First productions of plays by Dennis Kelly on the Bulgarian and the Croatian stages.
4. Drawing of three main challenges for the director working on contemporary texts for theater.
5. Approaches for dealing with the problematic phenomena in the staging process of a contemporary play are suggested.
6. Summarizing the practical experience and developing it to a theoretical level as a basis for future productions of modern British drama.

My wishes to Dr. Kaukov are: in future, in addition to his works as a manager, director, teacher, translator which undoubtedly are contributive, to devote more time for research and theoretical activity in which he definitely has potential judging by his publications and scientific papers and especially his doctoral work “Shakespeare’s Comedies Between Eros and Thanatos” which are distinguished for erudition, analytic virtues, striving towards theoretical understanding of practical experience and in-depth consideration of the problems.

In view of the already mentioned qualities of Dr. Petar Kaukov as a teacher, theater practitioner and researcher in the field of theater art, as well as of the contributive elements in the materials submitted for habilitation, I express a positive appraisal and back his candidature for the academic position of “Associate Professor” in Drama Theater Directing at the Kr. Sarafov National Academy for Theater and Film Arts.

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