

SHORT REVIEW

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. P. Gospodinov

Member of the Scientific Jury in the competition for the award of the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, announced by NAFTA in SG, issue 85 of 29th November 2019

The set of required documents submitted by Dr. Petar Kaukov - the candidate for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, are sufficient in type and volume and give grounds to consider the candidature to the point.

Mr. Kaukov's biography shows that he is a professional with a serious education: Bachelor of Drama Theater Acting, Bachelor of Drama Theater Directing, Master of Drama Theater Directing, PhD of Theater Studies and Theater Art; he holds extensive professional, administrative and pedagogical experience. He played as an actor in various theaters, staged more than 25 productions in the country and abroad, worked as a deputy director of some of the leading repertory theaters, was the coordinator of international projects, and currently works as a director of the NATFA Theater. The productions he directed were appraised with prestigious national awards in various categories. There is an extensive list of his publications and reports in prestigious national and international editions and forums. Dr. Kaukov's thesis was on "Shakespeare's Comedies – Issues of Stage Interpretation" a result of which is the recent book *Shakespeare's Comedies Between Eros and Tanatos* (Sofia, 2019).

The works that Dr. Kaukov has presented for participation in this competition are: translations of Dennis Kelly's plays "Love and Money" and "DNA", his stage productions of the two plays, and the theoretical work "Dennis Kelly and the Criminal Daily Routine".

For evident reasons, I will not dwell on the translations, I neither have the originals nor feel proficient enough in the language. I will restrict myself to saying that while reading the translations of the plays and watching the productions performed, I felt the lyrics sounding homogeneous, authentic and effective.

Regarding the productions: *Love and Money* is staged at the N. Binev Youth Theater in 2011. P.Kaukov's directing method makes an impression immediately. Unobtrusiveness in terms of external effects, respect for the lyrics and confidence

in the actors combined with a solid development of motivations and characteristics. I consider the latter to be the greatest achievement of the production. It was no chance that in 2012, two of the performers received national awards for their roles. Through a delicate form adapted to chamber stage space, the dramas of the characters are played out in front of our eyes in an unexpected and convincing way. In the director's words, "Love seems to have vanished from the world and the most elementary treatment to other people has lost its foothold". The elements complementing the artistic stage image – set design, music, lighting, costumes, are also as appropriate.

The performance of "DNA" was realized at the Vitovitica Theater and Academy for Art and Culture in Osijek, Croatia, in 2019. The very choice of material speaks for the adequate pedagogical sense of Dr. Kaukov. Bearing in mind he would work with students he chose a text in which the age of characters, topics and speech characteristics would be close to the sensitivity of the young actors without the need for aesthetic compromises. Like in his previous production, Kaukov focuses the viewer's attention to the acting and the text layers. The stage image relies on a minimal décor (two benches) and a play with lighting. Which allows us to focus on the action and abilities and development of the young actors.

I find that the Bulgarian stage owes a lot to P. Kaukov for finding and introduction into stage life of one of the most award-winning British authors of the day. Directors who take pains to hunt out new texts and authors and to present them adequately and with the due respect to the Bulgarian audience, are quite rare.

The theoretical study on the works of the British playwright and the problems considered in the two plays, are in complete harmony with the realized performances. Kaukov not only demonstrates a good knowledge of the author and his topics but also of the cultural and social context they belong to. "... his characters (*D. Kelly's, my note*) are most ordinary – like us or like our relatives, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbors. It is in this way that Kelly sends a great warning to the modern viewer – that Evil lurks everywhere around us creeping for power over the whole world with nearly imperceptible small steps. And, it is our responsibility to be vigilant, to discover and to oppose it so as not to fall victim to the "frog effect" – to gradually and imperceptibly to boil over in our own delusion of comfort. Small misunderstandings, small compromises and frivolous disinterest are our biggest enemies, and they are not external. They live in and with us and are an integral part of our human nature." It is difficult to disagree with such a conclusion.

The works submitted by Dr. Kaukov have artistic and scientifically applied character. I find the contributions formulated by him to them, for completely valid.

In the conclusion of my short review, I would like to add the following. I closely know the personal and professional development of Dr. Kaukov. Since our uncertain first steps on the stage of the Plovdiv Youth Theatre. I am glad that over the years he extended and developed what was impressive even then: an analytical mind combined with unbridled studiousness; an organization in which the thought of the other person has always been in the first place and, above all, a love of theater and culture in general. I find his presence in the Bulgarian theater pedagogy and in particular in the Theater Academy valuable.

I vote “YES” with conviction and conscience.