

A REVIEW

by

Prof. Emilia Konstantinova Angelova-Petkova

for

Chief Asst. Prof. Lora Viktorova Mutisheva, PhD

For the award of the academic position of Assoc.Prof. in Theater Studies and Theater Art (Stage Speech) announced by “Kr. Sarafov” NATFA

Chief Asst. Prof. Lora Mutisheva, PhD, is a teacher in Correct Speech, Speech Technique, Verbal Action and Public Speech at the Stage Speech Department, Kr. Sarafov NATFA.

She graduated the Theater Academy, in the Acting for Drama Theater Specialty in 2005 with a bachelor's degree. In 2008, she defended her master's thesis in Marketing at the Economic Institute at the BAS and the St.St. Kiril and Metodiy University. In 2015, she acquired scientific and educational degree PhD in Theater Studies and Theater Art, with the dissertation "VOICE-SPEECH CHARACTERISTICS IN THE CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO THE STAGE IMAGE ESTABLISHMENT".

Since 2009 she has been a teacher at NATFA, and since 2010 she has been an actress at the Sofia Theater (while before that, she played at the Geo Milev Theater, Stara Zagora).

Throughout all this period, she successfully combined her pedagogic career with the acting one. This symbiosis proved to be extremely well "working formula" as Mutisheva used her practical skills acquired at the theater, in her establishment as a teacher in Stage Speech.

In her work, she focuses on the ROLE OF THE VERBAL ACTION IN THE VOICE-SPEECH TRAINING as a basic factor for stage image establishment. Is precisely the thing that lays the direction in her research and analyses which later also determined the theme of her PhD dissertation "Voice-Speech Characteristics In The Contemporary Approach To The Stage Image Establishment" she successfully defended in 2015. This is also her start to the scientific comprehension of her pedagogic efforts which led to the more mature period of writing the VERBAL ACTION IN ACTION book with which Chief Asst. Lora Mutisheva applies to the competition for an Assoc. Prof. announced by NATFA.

I find her motives for writing this book in the "INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION" Chapter. There, the author very reasonably explains her concern by the fact that "with all the technological possibilities that become more and more attractive means of expression in the theater, the actor, the living actor is increasingly left alone!" (p. 143). It seems that the director's attention is more focused on innovation and the actor is increasingly appearing as one of the "components" in the show, but not necessarily THE MOST IMPORTANT.

As an actress, on the one hand, she realizes that the actor is expected to know the way, the mechanics and the means to achieve the desired impact (p. 114). On the other hand, as a teacher, she realizes her responsibility as one of the factors in the training of young actors. Therefore, she tries to inspire respect for the profession and to uncover the way of professional maturing to the student relying on her stage experience and striving to apply the most effective system possible for improvement and maintenance of psycho-physical resilience and the due acting techniques without which the acting profession is impossible, especially through the prism of VERBAL ACTION.

In my opinion, this is also the main motive that provoked Mutisheva into writing the book “VERBAL ACTION IN ACTION”.

I would call this book “A GUIDE TO THE THEATER PROFESSION”. It definitely stirs the reader’s curiosity while being in the same time very useful for the young actors since the author traces all the way the actor goes from role assignment to premiere. She explains the significance of each stage and each element of the rehearsal process. Mutisheva proves how important each detail of the path of stage image structuring is. In her book, she pays attention to one, I would say neglected fact – how much all the components around the birth and the existence of a performance are MUTUALLY BOUND AND DEPENDING ON ONE ANOTHER! And, how big a role they play in implementation of the VERBAL ACTION. In my opinion, this is one of the contributing moments in the book where the author skillfully and extremely precisely traces every step, every detail that has something to do with the creative process. She does not even miss the role of the costume (especially the corset) which also influences the verbal action.

It was the first time I came across this kind of a text related to the stage speech, and this roused my interest for the work but I was even more impressed by the author’s viewpoint by which she proves that “All the questions and problems of the verbal action evolve from its connection with the other components of the spectacle” (p. 8).

The book also provokes to asking a few questions! For example: How much are these details needed? ...after all, there is a director who directs the process... BUT... continuing to read, I realize that the attractiveness of the work stems exactly from the original style of the exposition (which, I think, is a successful find), namely – the direct address to the reader. I.e., she talks with him, and this

shortens the distance between author and reader, without undermining the professional qualities of the work. Thus, the reader who is tempted by the acting profession, or the student in Acting approaches the specifics and subtleties in mastering technical acting skills and requirements in the stage image development.

This is a work written with remarkable self-esteem! May be, someone would ask “Does a relatively young actress and educator have the right to be so explicit in the tips she gives?” ... I would say... Why not?!... In the book, the author, in fact, describes her experience, shares her practices (she has 14 years on stage already). More importantly, as a stage speech teacher, she’s had the courage to expose her views, her standpoint for the verbal action and stage image development based on her experience and in a very original way. This is, I think, the explanation of the author’s self-esteem to create this original THEATRICAL GUIDE.

By this book, she strives to inspire in the actor the necessity to develop techniques and skills by himself through which he would provoke his creative energy and imagination in accordance to his individual needs, i.e. to develop a system for maintenance of voice-speech skills, finding the proper means of expression in developing the verbal and movement score (p. 24).

All this leads to the conclusion that the book could also be considered as a kind of “self-instructing manual” as we find a lot of valuable practical tips. For example: when learning a text, she advises: “When you learn a text for the first time, don’t use the word “memorize”... it implies a photographic perception of the text – the speech becomes mechanical, devoid of feeling”... or “Don’t whisper when learning a text... Don’t take decisions about HOW the words are voiced! Find out WHAT and WHY you say... (p. 33), etc.

The author seems to have missed none of the components that influence the implementation of the verbal action. She highlights the role of the rehearsal process, of the individual components such as costume, props, wig, lighting which directly or indirectly influence the self-esteem and the behavior of the actor, and hence also the speech. Special room is allocated, for example, to the “Verbal Action and Space”, “Verbal Action in Action”, which include the period around the premiere accompanied by the inevitable “stage fever”; she doesn’t fail to note also the periods of recovering rehearsals, dubbing, verbal action and multimedia, work with microphone, etc.

The book also highlights the significant issues the actor faces not only during the rehearsals of a performance but throughout his entire creative career,

too. She pays attention to a lot of factors that lead to uncertainty and doubts whether the actor is ready to meet with the audience which is one of the major stressing situations.

It is these inconveniences that lead to “stage fever”, to discomfort, she writes and therefore advises that the salvation is “to act on your tasks...” (p. 79).

Chief Asst. Mutisheva does not fail to pay special attention to the VOICE as one of the actor’s major means of expression. She offers valuable professional tips for voice maintenance despite its exposition to a variety of verbal challenges and side effects such as fatigue, sickness, tobacco smoking, etc.

Mutisheva’s pedagogical activity is implemented in many directions. Her professionalism can also be judged by the selection of artistic texts she works upon with the students in “Stage Speech”. She selects works of high artistic value, thus cultivating TASTE in the students, on the one hand, and on the other she gives them the opportunity to become acquainted with high-class specimens of Bulgarian and world literature, for example - the poetry of François Fillon, Ovid’s “Metamorphoses”, E.E. Schmidt, Homer, K. Pavlov, G. Gospodinov, etc. She has performed a number of poetic compositions and productions with the classes of Prof. Pl. Markov, Prof. Iv. Christov, Prof. R. Rachev, Prof. At. Atanasov... She also actively participates as a speech teacher in the preparation of many performances.

A number of performed poetic performances have been awarded with prestigious awards such as: "2017 Skillful Verbal Expression" for the participation of ISTF "Danail Chirpanski", Special Prize of the International Jury at the 36th International Festival VGIK 2016 for the play "Uncle Balcho mentions", etc.

The activity of Chief Asst. Lora Mutisheva as a speech teacher is performed not only within NATFA framework. She conducts a number of master classes in 2017, 2018 and 2019 at the Chernorizets Hrabar VFU in the field of Public Speech specialty which Mutisheva teaches in the NATFA Master’s Programme. The topics of the performed master’s classes are:

1. The Art of Public Speech, 2017
2. The Art of Communication, 2018
3. "The Art of Communication", 2019 - Faculty of International Economics and Administration, "Chernorizets Hrabar" Varna Free University, Pomorie.

She also defends her professional qualifications through publications in reputable specialized publications:

1. "Language in the 20th Century Theater", Theater Magazine, 2015
2. "Dualistic Approaches to Vocal Training in the 20th Century " Kr.Sarafov Year-book, 2015

I am intentionally noting the candidate's pedagogical activities, as with that I would like to emphasize her active participation in the life and problems of the Stage Speech Department at the National Academy of Theater and Film Arts!

Of course, the greatest attention should be paid to the book issued in 2019 which I perused profoundly at the beginning of the Review since this is also the major material with which Mutisheva participates in the competition for ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR. It is by it that she proves herself a teacher who deserves a chance for development! The author imperceptibly and fascinatingly introduces us to the kitchen of a theatrical product creation – through the stages an actor goes through to develop his stage image.

A lot of contributing moments can be found in the book. By seemingly “peer” advices, she pays attention to extremely important details which the actor often doesn’t notice or considers insignificant.

In her work the author proves that all the details and stage components are mutually related to develop an entire performance, and all of them are significant in the construction of the verbal action, i.e., all of them are actions in their own way!

1. This book is necessary for the young actor as it gives him the opportunity to comprehend and easily overcome the TRANSITION from what he learned at the theater academy to its implementation in theater practice, on theater stage!
2. A valuable and fascinating guide in the depths of theater art
3. Mutisheva also draws attention to a very significant issue – the ABSENCE OF A SPEECH TEACHER OR CONSULTANT who would work with the actors to implement the verbal action! This is a neglected activity which the contemporary theater is in serious need of, given the increasingly negligent attitude towards voice technique of the actor who relies more and more on modern technical means like microphone, play-back, etc. That’s why, I

consider this fact, which found room in Mutisheva's book, as a substantial contribution.

The book is accompanied with a poll conducted with actors which is a kind of a mirror of the issues explored by her, relevant to the VERBAL ACTION. The replies of the respondents are dominated by problems related to the stage self-confidence of the actors stemming by the presence of stage tension, voice problems, breathing, overcoming the stage space, etc.

The results of the poll are, in fact, a confirmation of the need for a book like this one of Lora Mutisheva, "VERBAL ACTION IN ACTION"!

Conclusion:

It is encouraging when there are creators in a field (in this case – theater art) who are concerned by the problems arising in the creative process of staging a performance. It is even more joyful when, reasonably and with a great dose of responsibility, these creators devote their creative energy to finding out the problems in a field, making efforts to formulate and show the way to solve them! Chief Asst. Lora Mutisheva is such a creator and, in her successful combination of performing actress and teacher in Stage Speech, does her best to be useful to the cause she dedicated herself to – THEATER!

This motivates me to not hesitate in supporting her candidacy in the competition for the award of the position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in Stage Speech announced by Kr. Sarafov National Academy for Theater and Film Arts!

I vote „YES“!

Prof. EMILIA ANGELOVA-PETKOVA, PhD