

# STATEMENT

by Prof. Dr. Mira Kalanova

NATFA “Kr. Sarafov”

Professional field 8.4 Theatre and Film Art

regarding the acquisition of the scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 8.4 Theatre and Film Art, with candidate Vasilena Valerieva Radeva

I have known the doctoral candidate Vasilena Radeva since she was a student, and I have followed her development as a director with pleasure. Her interest in documentary texts and their integration into dramaturgical and stage language is lasting and visible in her productions “Nordost. A Tale of Destruction”, “Bluebeard - Marriage Without a Fairy Tale”, and “Body Thrown at an Angle to the Horizon”. The social and political role of theatre, its functioning as a factor in social and cultural life, as a filter for neglected problems, and as an instrument for provoking dialogue are topics that actively concern Vasilena Radeva. This attitude of hers toward art, her motivation as an artist and director, and her position as a researcher arise from an existential need to seek truth and from the creative aspiration to achieve truthfulness in theatre.

For this reason, I find the choice of topic of the dissertation submitted for consideration logical, and I fully understand not only the scholarly interest in the topic, but also the author’s emotional connection and creative experience, which cannot be hidden and which add considerable value to the qualities of the work. I believe that the interrelation between theory, history, and practice, on which both the structure and the perspective on the scholarly problem under consideration are built, is particularly valuable. I believe that the research problem - the construction of theatrical reality from factual material (documentary, journalistic, autobiographical) - is examined very well and traced not only historically, but also within the territory of theatre theory and, above all, in practice, where the act of creation, the creative process of building a performance from documentary and dramaturgical texts, is seen as a possible subject of the research: the relations between document and fiction in the contemporary performance based on a true case, as well as the authorial presence of the director and the actor in theatre based on a true case. The topic of the dissertation is particularly relevant. Theatre based on a true case is one of the most dynamically developing contemporary theatrical genres. In recent years it has been gaining increasing popularity in the Bulgarian theatrical environment as well. The coexistence of art and its socio-historical time -

peaceful or otherwise - has always been a reason for numerous scholarly discussions, studies, and achievements.

The objectives set by the author of the dissertation - to examine the presence or absence of conflict between the concepts of document and fiction as related to theatre based on a true case, as well as the specific ways and forms of their interaction in the different subgenres of non-documentary theatre, whose development and popularization have been observed in recent decades in Bulgaria - have been achieved through the well-structured text and the precisely formulated research tasks. I believe that the clarification of basic concepts in the field of the performing arts connected with theatre based on a true case is important not only for the precision of the stated theses and ideas, but also for the quality of the scholarly writing, as well as for the clear articulation of the researched subject and the conclusions drawn. The analysis of the staging methods of the Bulgarian artists selected by V. Radeva and of the stage language of their performances, as well as the conversations conducted with the authors, expand the theoretical boundaries of the scholarly problem under study and are extremely valuable for the analysis of the creative process and result, as well as for the formation of the necessary conclusions.

The theoretical part of the dissertation is based on a rich bibliography and a substantial number of scholarly studies in the fields of documentary and non-documentary theatre, the visual arts, psychology, and sociology. The interdisciplinary approach is important and yields results in the investigation and systematization of the research. In the study of contemporary non-documentary practices in Bulgarian theatre after 2000, concepts, statements, and specific staging approaches of the creators of the examined productions are analyzed. The dissertation text also includes personal impressions of the doctoral candidate V. Radeva, as well as an autoreflexive analysis of part of her professional experience, which fits within the subject of this dissertation. Auto-analysis in such a scholarly text requires very precise critical analysis and emotional detachment, which V. Radeva has succeeded in achieving. I highly value the absence of pathos in these parts of the text.

I find particularly valuable, not only for the purposes of the dissertation, the presented teaching experience of the author connected with the introduction of non-documentary theatrical methods into actor-training education. The academic development of every artist is based on the interrelation between scholarship and experience. Art, which is to a large extent a subjective experience, must, in the hands of the pedagogue, stand on solid foundations - foundations created precisely by good theoretical preparation, critical thinking, and practical experience.

I categorically believe that the scholarly work fulfils the set tasks very well and, above all, establishes a sound scholarly basis for developing questions related to truth in the performing arts in a contemporary context. In the study, the opposition fact/fiction becomes a possible symbiosis precisely through the synthesis of means; this is not a matter of merging into a common amalgam, but of interrelations. In painting, each colour is emphasized most strongly through its contrasting colour. The “opposition” examined in the dissertation is considered in similar terms. I find particularly important the conclusions related to the analysis and interpretation of stage time and factual time, as well as the emphasized attention to stage space in the analyzed performances - a topic that is especially close to me and that is highly relevant because of the move beyond the conventions of the black box and all the problems this poses for the director, the set designer, and the actors.

In view of everything stated above, I categorically express my opinion that the dissertation possesses all the qualities necessary for it to be highly evaluated and in accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education Act and New Bulgarian University. I vote in favour of awarding doctoral candidate Vasilena V. Radeva the scientific degree “Doctor”.

Prof. Dr. Mira Kalanova