

STATEMENT

by **Prof. EVA ISRAEL VOLITZER PhD,**

NBU, habilitated in the scientific field 8.4.Theatrical and film art,

Regarding the contributions of the proposed artistic and research activities

of **Assia Hristova Ivanova, PhD,** Chief assistant professor –

New Bulgarian University – Sofia, for participation in a competition

announced in the State Gazette (№47/14.06.2019) for the academic position

Associate Professor, at the Theatre Department

The proposed artistic and research activities by Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Assia Christova Ivanova as well as her artistic and creative activity meet the minimum national requirements and the requirements set by New Bulgarian University for the awarding the the academic degree of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR.

The proposed artistic and research activities by Assia Hristova Ivanova is based on innovative theoretical and practical searches and realizations in the field of experiments in performing stage relationships between music, dance, and theatrical action. The candidate's contribution to the research and stage activities related to these innovative ideas and public performances is valuable and significant. Working for more than 20 years (since her studies at NBU) with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vazkresia Viharova, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zarko Uzunov, and the composer Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Arnaudov, Assia Ivanova has contributed immensely to the development of a new and progressive stage method, combining the physical training of Laban technique, Feldenkrais, Mime Corporeal, Theater No, Playing with objects on stage, etc. The active presence of music in combination with theatrical expressiveness is a significant achievement, both in the creative development of the candidate and in her contribution to the enrichment of stage expressions in the wide range of theatrical suggestion. Naturally, this interconnectedness of music with theater stems from her solid music education in addition to her theatrical one, the symbiosis of which creates a different, new, and enriching theatrical research experience. This new and time-honored research and stage

practice was realized in the program *Customs* and the performance *Inje* (directed by V. Viharova and Z. Uzunov), in which in the very first performance and further in the development over the years, almost to this day, Assia Ivanova has had a significant acting and research presence that embodies the scientific and creative pursuits of the experiment and the program. Inspired by the exceptional books of Ivan Hadzhiyski, *Optimistic Theory of Our People* and *The Life and Soul of the Bulgarian People*, this program and performances, respectively, get their creative flesh and send their messages through one of the main actors-researchers in it, namely Assia Ivanova. "We created solo and group scores there for the first time. Some of them were highly abstract, close to the dance, while others - sufficiently specific and related to the theatrical action. Terms, such as translation and rotation, entered the vocabulary of actors and students of the Theater program to discover new mechanisms of communication and means of expression "(A. Ivanova, *Music, Movement and Image in the Actor's Practice and Training*).

The searches in this direction have been further developed, refined and brought to completion in the enrichment and development of the program with a subsequent project, namely the research project *Ritual - Theater - Ritual* on the following theme: *Investigation of the possible role of Ritual (dramatic, play, and role scheme) as a formative factor for the theatrical performance (genre, location in space - physical, social, and aesthetic, performers' psychophysical techniques, role parameters)*. In a working team led by Assoc. Prof. Vazkresia Viharova, Assia Ivanova has had a significant participation and contributed significantly to the scientific and research achievements in the study of the Ritual: "Via a structural analysis of the Bulgarian folk dance a deconstruction of the musical and rhythmic laws has been achieved or they have been transformed according to certain principles." (A.Ivanova, *Music, Movement and Image in the Actor's Practice and Training*). A significant contribution of the candidate is a "study of the relationship between the playing techniques of the ritual player and the psychophysical techniques of the actor-performer at the level of training, rehearsal process, and performance."

Assia Ivanova has an important research, cast, and director contribution in other programs and projects implemented over the years such as the *PHONOPTIKFORM* program. Her contribution to the combination of living human presence and new technologies is particularly emphasized. Thus, mono acting performance *My father who acted through culinary and other periods* is an achievement of the candidate along with her team in terms of contemporary theatrical language

“live performance” and “multimedia art”. Later, this symbiosis was encountered in a number of performances, but Assia Ivanova and the team with which this project was implemented were pioneers in this endeavor in Bulgaria. The innovation was also reflected in the directorial work of the candidate related to the construction of the physical behavior of the actors on stage in the next two performances: *Family Voices* and *Fiery Face*. The principles of the PHONOPTIKFORM program were vividly embodied in the play *Blacksmiths*, directed by Voskresia Viharova, where Assia Ivanova had a major role and was nominated for the Icarus Prize 2013 by the Union of Actors in Bulgaria. I watched this performance and was amazed at the virtuosity with which the actress Assia Ivanova switched different means of expression, at the precision of her musical score, and at the complex tempo rhythm of the role she possessed.

The pursuit and achievements in the direction of acting Assia Ivanova continues in the play *Cherry sisters*. In this performance, the interactions and symbiosis between musical and stage score were reflected in the creative presence of the candidate in it. The performance had several realizations, and in the one following the first A. Ivanova was already part of the production team and achieved a simultaneity of the different scores (general, group, and individual) through her successful training of the participants. "Historically, I can relate this kind of movement work and stage gesture to Meyerhold's musical realism and the principles set out in his method of teaching the actor - biomechanics. Every movement, position, and sound must be organized, every action must have the distinctness to prevent involuntary, parasitic movements. The structure or the scheme allows the actor to organize and support his expression "(A. Ivanova, Music, Movement and Image in the Actor's Practice and Training) .

During the years of active creative activity, Assia Ivanova has had many achievements in creating stage images in *The House of Bernard Alba* (2005, Icarus Prize), *Good Night, Mom, Lovers, Gilgamesh*, etc.; choreography (*Fiery Face* by M.Fon Mayenburg, State Theater Strumica, Macedonia), directing *Horovod*, *Cherry Sisters* (twice in 2014 and 2016 at the NBU Study Theater).

Assia Ivanova's teaching activity is significant and reflects her development in the direction of physical training and expression through the body of the actor. Based on the years of cooperation with Assoc. Prof. Voskresia Viharova and Assoc. Prof. Zarko Uzunov and their training system, Assia Ivanova has built her own approach and method for physical training, linking it to sound:

expression-image. In her teaching, she applies Rudolf Laban's technique and qualifications and Pavis' specificity for movement and gesture. Being a musically educated actress, Assia Ivanova enriches the teaching practices with theoretical teaching of certain elements of the music theory that can directly influence the construction of the stage image. This is a contribution to the combination of musical knowledge with acting techniques taught by one and the same teacher, as in this case is Ivanova's pedagogical practice. Assia Ivanova's courses, namely "Music and Rhythm", "Voice Practice", "Rhythm", etc combine original voice and rhythm exercises, knowledge of the basics of the music training needed by the contemporary actor. Introducing and practicing the training actors on the topics of rhythm, metrum, size, tact, tempo, Assia Ivanova introduces progressive pedagogical elements in the education of the actors, especially in the knowledge of the boundary between music and theatrical acting and the acquisition of skills in this direction. In the exercise *Action* (or series of actions) practiced with students, the assistant professor Assia Ivanova combines the aforementioned music and acting practices and knowledge so necessary for the complex profession of the contemporary actor.

My personal impressions of Assia Ivanova are of an artist dedicated to the art of acting and teaching, having high requirements for her own work and her work with students, uncompromising to the quality and high mission of art.

Based on the aforementioned, I recommend that the distinguished academic jury vote for the awarding of the academic title ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR to Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Assia Christova Ivanova.

October 12, 2019

Signature:

Prof. Eva Volitzer PhD

