

NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY

Department " Theater"

ASSIA CHRISTOVA IVANOVA

**Music, movement and image in the actor's
practice and training**

Abstract of the creative work report presented in the competition for
academic position "associate professor".

(SUMMARY)

Sofia, 2019

The purpose of the report is to present my creative achievements in the context of my overall work as an actor and pedagogue. The report is synthetic because it summarizes my previous research work on the teaching methodology and the development of the actor's stage aids. This practical work has found expression in many projects, performances and trainings over the years, the most important of which are discussed in detail below.

There are two major parts in the report. The first part displays my stage performances and my contribution in relation to the theoretical field in which I study the relationships between different actor's stage techniques. I focus on those performances and activities in my professional practice as an actress, which clearly indicate new approaches to the development of the theatrical form, which are in line with current trends in the field of theatrical art. I present this creative work from the perspective of an actor, focusing on acting, the skills and the means of expression developed in time.



The report begins with the research program “**Customs**” because for many of us, the first graduates of the NBU theater program, it has a fundamental role. The authors of this large-scale study are the director V. Viharova and arch. Z. Uzunov. The work on the “Customs” performance

has evolved into a research program that I have been involved with since its inception. Besides being an actress in the shows "**Customs**" and "**Inje**" my activities in the project also included training sessions with students in the context of the methodology and philosophy of physical theater (based on Kuda dance, etc.), public presentations, street actions "**Passerby**", recording video presentations, participating in research project "**Ritual - theater - ritual**", preparation of documentation, etc.

One of the main research goals of the program, to which my participation and contributions are mainly related, is the study of the relationship between the playing techniques of the ritual player and the psychophysical techniques of the performer at the level of training, rehearsal process, performance and release from the performance.

Another long-term research program of the same team of Viharova & Uzunov, where I actively participated as an actor-performer is PHONOPTIKFORM. The direction of the program is associated with the uses of the media and new technologies in the theater, testing it on methods of interaction between the live performance of the actor and a plurality of available narrative structures and parallel levels in the performance.

The aspirations and goals of the **PHONOPTIKFORM** program , in this trend-compliant direction, were first defined in Peter Turini's play "**Alpine glow**" performed in 1997, Sofia (director: Vaskresia Viharova; set design: arch. Zarko Uzunov; music: Georgi Arnaudov; actors: Asya Ivanova, Hristo Botev, Nevin Kadir, Tsvetomir Lazarov).

Other performances included in the program and in which I have been involved as an actress were "**Die Präsidentinne**", "**Good Night, Mom**", "**Amarantos** " and "**Blacksmiths** ".



"The " Blacksmiths" multiplies the characters and possibilities of the text, making it a mix of radio, grotesque, cinema and variety. Every slightest chance of falling into the ordinary is drowned out by

elegant parody of expressionist theater, mixed with Balkan temperament, advertising clichés from the 50's, black and white cinemas, cameras that monitor and overexpose images, flashy costumes and accessories which introduce us to a fantastic dystopia called the "bright European future". All this not without the help of the wonderful play of the actors Assia Ivanova, Antoaneta Petrova, Michail Milchev, Rosen Belov and students from the program "Theater" - NBU. "

Gergana Pirozova - article in Capital Light from December 6, 2012



In the years Theater Department's training program included courses with topics related to those ones set out in **PHONOPTIKFORM**. This way, quite naturally, with another graduate of the program, director Dejan Damianovski (Macedonia), we continued our research in this direction in three performances - the mono acting performance **"My father who acted through culinary and other periods"** by Elizabeth Mazev, **"Family Voices"** by Harold Pinter and **"Fiery Face"** by Marius von Mayenburg .

In the report I pay special attention to the construction and work with the so-called. "**actor's score**" - in my stage practice and in acting training .

For the first time in “Inge”, we created solo and group scores. Some of them were highly abstract, close to dance, and others quite specific and related to theatrical performance. With the help of provocations by Arch. Zarko Uzunov, we have defined different principles for working with one score and ways of interaction between a soloist and a group. Terms such as translation and rotation have entered the vocabulary of actors and students from the Theater program to find new mechanisms of communication and expression.

Searches in this direction were further developed, refined and brought to completion in the three editions of the production of Michael Green’s play “Cherry Sisters” (by the same production team). The theatrical form was based on three main scores: one common for the whole group, three for small groups of three actors and each actor's individual modulations and interactions. Apart from the movement system, part of the text was developed by the composer Georgi Arnaudov as a musical score, with fixed melody, duration and dynamics of pronunciation of the text. Modulation and interaction between movement and musical scores and their developments following laws similar to those of musical form led to a structure similar to the theme and variation form or rondo form in music. The musicalization of the form was deepened and further developed in the next two premieres of the production in 2014 and 2016 (my participation in them is in the production team as the second director).



The second part of the report presents my teaching activities, in which I work following the method of physical training. Particular emphasis in this part is placed on my contribution to the development of specific practices in which the student of acting learns different elements of music theory and how to use them to develop stage techniques and skills.



For more than 20 years, most of my professional life has been associated with the New Bulgarian University and the Theater Department. As a graduate of the first graduation of the Theater program, I had the opportunity to be trained in specific psychophysical training, which was unique in the Bulgarian theatrical context. The authors of this program are the director Vaskresia Viharova and arch. Zarko Uzunov . Almost immediately after completing my studies, I was invited to take separate training courses, part of the methodology of the above authors. Subsequently, I had the opportunity to become acquainted with different methodologies and to attend numerous practical seminars in the field of physical training – Laban, Feldenkrais , Mime Corporeal , theater “ No ”, “ Playing with objects on stage ” and more . This training has had a great impact on my development as an actress and pedagogue. The actor’s physical training has gradually become a specific feature in the NBU theatrical program and it has been in the focus of my work as a teacher.

The recent years my professional interest has been focused on the interaction between music and theater. This interest is provoked largely by my solid music education, which gives me the opportunity to have a different perspective and experience in the field of music-theater interaction. Some of the courses I currently teach in the Theater program are related to teaching music theory to actors. It is a new challenge in my pedagogical practice, which is also a subject to presentation in the report.

In conclusion I would like to summarize the contributing points in my research, practice and teaching:

1. Development of tools and principles in the physical theater practice.
2. Research of the interaction between the actor and the contemporary media and new technologies in the theater.
3. Musicalization of the actor’s means of expression.
4. Development of specific university courses at NBU, which bring to the Bulgarian theatrical pedagogy modern world practices in the field of physical training.
5. Development of a specific methodology for musical training of the actors.

These contributions are the result of many years work in the academic and theatrical environment of NBU. They are a consequence not only of my individual efforts and achievements, but also of the common work with my colleagues and students from the Theater Department. The work of the actor and the teacher of acting is open to development over time, so achievements and contributions at some point are the basis and prerequisite for new pursuits, projects and achievements.



Photo from the show "Alpine glow" 1997. National Palace of Culture, Sofia

Bibliography:

- **Биаджини, М.** 2004. *Извадки от дискусията с Томас Ричардс и Марио Биаджини, проведена във Фестивален и конгресен център – Варна // Homo Ludens, 2004, № 10*
- **Иванова, Ася** ;2012г. „Музика – танц – театрално действие.(Гранични сценични форми) – докторска дисертация; <http://eprints.nbu.bg/3282/>
- **Павис, Патрис,** 2002. *Речник на театъра.* София.
- **Станиславски, К. С.** 2016. *Работата на актьора с ролята, том 2.* София.
- **Хаджиев, П.** 1983. *Елементарна теория на музиката.* София.
- **Lehmann, Hans-Thies.** 2006. *Postdramatic Theater,* Routledge, Oxon.