

## OPINION

by

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on Desislava Shpatova's dissertation entitled

INGMAR BERGMAN ON THE BULGARIAN THEATRE STAGE

for awarding a Doctoral educational and scientific degree

Desislava Shpatova has chosen a significant topic for her dissertation, hitherto unexplored in Bulgarian theatre studies. Contemporary cinema has generally taken the opposite direction to Bergman's films, i.e. most often than not, the dramatic relies on sensational interpretations of plots brought about by an abundance of sex and violence, as well as by transporting the viewer into illusory fantasy spaces, by and large in line with the Hollywood tradition. In fact, these patterns, truly leading to extreme reactions of human behaviour, are at the heart of the majority of Bergman's films, but he manages to penetrate deep into the subconscious life to discover and trace psychological processes. Building his plays around an in-depth psychoanalytic view of human nature, he conveys this influence onto the creation of an utterly expressive psychological cinematic language. The lucky combination of directing practice in theatre and cinema alike contributes to the creative uniqueness of Bergman's works. The specificity of this art and Bergman's self-reflection as an author is what stands out in Shpatova's dissertation.

There is a clear correlation between the chosen methodology and the objectives and goals set by the thesis as evidenced by the thorough research on Bergman's methods in theatre and cinema as well as by the analysis and key themes, aesthetic and semantic core of all his works. The analysis covers Bergman's autobiographical books, as well as his dramaturgical and literary works. Through this wide-ranging approach Desislava Shpatova manages to reach the heart of the modern and everlasting presence of Bergman's methodology, in line with the demand for spontaneous internal impulse in contemporary acting. The dissertation traces the path of emergence and re-emergence of the feelings awakened in the director's childhood such as dreams, visions, nightmares as a creative potential, later embodied by Bergman in his

works . Childhood is seen in its complex interconnectedness with memory and forgetfulness. The eternal return and re-creation of the memory is also discovered as a source of metaphorical imagery and mythological references in theatre and cinema, and of psychoanalytic insight through work with the actor.

The merits of the dissertation lie in that it posits Bergman's methodology as applicable to contemporary stage practices. This hypothesis is further supported by Desislava Shpatova' analyses of plays based on texts by Bergman in Bulgaria as well as on the influence of his directorial methods on Bulgarian theatre practice, sketchy as it may be. It is noteworthy, that Desislava Shpatova has a valuable firsthand experience in this field such as her plays *The art of sweeping it under the carpet* staged with the Pazardzhik theatre, *Hour of the Wolf* with the Youth Theatre and *The Change* based on texts written by Liv Ullmann and Ingmar Bergman with University Theatre to NBU. In support of her analytical search, Desislava Shpatova interviews actress Stanka Kalcheva, theatre critic and director Elitsa Mateeva and director Elena Panayotova, the method used being pre-formulated interview questions. The latter produce some valuable observations and reflections related to the topic of the dissertation. In my opinion, a brief explanation of the principle of choice of interviewees (without objections to the choice itself) is needed to justify the reasoning behind the choice of interviewed people who prove the fruitful impact of Bergman's methodology as an upgrade of creative experience.

The conclusions of the research are aimed directly at stage practices. Building an idea of Bergman's creative power through the analysis of his theatrical and cinematic methodology, which mutually enrich each other, Shpatova proves their value as creative provocation and methodological reference point for the Bulgarian stage. She studies and analyzes the stage interpretations of Bergman's texts in Bulgaria and through them she confirms the possible beneficial influences of his directing methodology. In its entirety, the research work is contributive in nature and unique in its approach on a significant phenomenon in the world of theatre, with an impact on Bulgarian theatre life, albeit so far insufficiently agile. The thesis can be merited for its analysis of Bergman's theatre methodology itself, which supported by case studies, can be productively applied in teaching too.

To sum up, I would like to stress my satisfaction with the thorough view that Desislava Shpatova's dissertation provides: the introduction to the idea of Bergman's complex personality, the analysis of topics to which he obsessively returns and arduously revisits propagating not only his very personal confessional art, but also his own universal and philosophical nature with visions, memories, nightmares and ecstasy.

Based on the above mentioned merits of the research work, I hereby give a positive evaluation of the thesis and state my wholehearted support for awarding a Doctoral educational and scientific degree to Desislava Shpatova.

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Signature:

Anna Topaldzhikova