ACADEMY OF MUSIC, DANCE AND FINE ARTS

"PROF. ASEN DIAMANDIEV" – PLOVDIV

S T A T E M E N T

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elitsa Petrova Lukanova

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts

"Prof. Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv

on a dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"

Professional Field 8.3, "Music and Dance Art", Doctoral Programme "Choreography"

Doctoral candidate: TEODORA MARINCHEVA STANEVA

Doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Architecture, Department of Arts,

Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"

Dissertation title: "DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN DANCE IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM"

Academic supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Phd. Ivaylo Ivanov

1. General description of the submitted materials and significance of the topic

The dissertation submitted for review comprises 484 pages, structured into an introduction (9 pages), three chapters (248 pages), a conclusion (8 pages), and 19 appendices (194 pages). The bibliography includes 139 titles in Bulgarian, Russian and English (87 in Cyrillic and 52 in Latin script), as well as 24 online sources. The text contains 4 tables and 3 figures.

The dissertation topic is highly relevant and has considerable practical significance. It addresses a substantial pedagogical and regulatory issue in Bulgarian secondary education: the need for a scientifically grounded structure and methodological organisation of training in the profession of “Dancer”, specialty “Modern Dance”, following the entry into force of the Preschool and School Education Act in 2016.

Doctoral candidate Teodora Staneva occupies a distinctive dual position: she is both a practising teacher and the author of the first school curricula for the specialty at Konstantin Preslavski Secondary School of Humanities and Arts in Varna, as well as a dedicated researcher who systematically examines and conceptualises her own pedagogical experience.

2. Analysis of the content and principal issues addressed in the chapters

The dissertation is organised into three successive chapters that establish a logical and scientifically grounded framework, progressing from theory and history through comparative pedagogical experience to the practical development of a school-based model.

- **Chapter I: Theoretical and practical foundations of modern dance**

In Chapter One, the doctoral candidate establishes a solid foundation for the research by tracing the origins of modern dance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Particularly valuable is the in-depth examination of François Delsarte's "System of Expression" and its development into so-called "American Delsartism" (through Steele MacKaye, Genevieve Stebbins and Henrietta Hovey). The author convincingly demonstrates how ideas concerning the correspondence between inner psychological states and outward bodily expression informed the concepts of pioneers such as Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn and, subsequently, the foundational techniques of Martha Graham (contraction and release), José Limón (fall and recovery, suspension) and Lester Horton. The role of Dalcroze eurhythmics and Rudolf Laban's spatial analysis is also outlined. An important conclusion of this chapter is that modern dance does not reject classical ballet training; rather, it draws on its physical discipline while incorporating work with gravity, the centre of the body, breathing and the floor.

- **Chapter II: Methodological foundations and comparative analysis of dance education systems**

Chapter Two examines international practice and the institutionalisation of dance education. The author compares leading international models: the American higher and secondary education system (with its flexible, individualised and practice-oriented approach) and the Russian dance education system (characterised by rigorous academic training, methodological codification and systematic organisation). On the basis of this comparative pedagogical analysis, Staneva identifies principles applicable to the Bulgarian educational environment. The chapter also offers a valuable historical overview of the conditions that led to the emergence and establishment of the "Modern Dance" specialty in Bulgarian school

education, particularly at Konstantin Preslavski Secondary School of Humanities and Arts in Varna.

- **Chapter III: Applied model, regulatory analysis and curricula at Konstantin Preslavski Secondary School of Humanities and Arts – Varna**

Chapter Three represents the culmination and practical core of the dissertation. It addresses the central research problem: how the inherent freedom and individualism of modern dance can be accommodated within the regulated framework of Bulgarian school education after 2016 (the Preschool and School Education Act, Framework Curriculum B4 and the State Educational Standards). The author provides a detailed analysis of the curricula she developed for Grades 8–12. An innovative spiral model for organising educational content is presented, in which fundamental concepts are progressively expanded with increasing technical and compositional complexity. The chapter traces interdisciplinary links between classical, modern, contemporary and jazz dance, improvisation, composition and stage practice, as well as a system of comprehensive competency-based assessment tested over a complete five-year course of study.

3. Evaluation of the scientific and applied scientific contributions

The dissertation's contributions are clearly identified and encompass both theoretical advances and direct scientific and practical applications:

A. Advancement of existing knowledge (theoretical contributions):

1. **Historical-genetic and terminological analysis: The origins of modern dance are examined in depth, clarifying the role of François Delsarte's**

System of Expression, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze's eurhythmics and Rudolf von Laban's analytical approach.

2. **Conceptual differentiation: The concepts of "modern dance" and "contemporary dance techniques" are clearly and methodologically distinguished, while the complementary function of classical ballet exercises as a fundamental academic basis is substantiated.**
3. **Comparative pedagogical synthesis: Leading educational models in the United States and Russia are analysed and compared, yielding principles adaptable to the Bulgarian school environment.**

B. Application of scientific achievements in practice (applied scientific and practical contributions):

1. **Development of the first original educational model: A comprehensive conceptual model for the organisation, content and interdisciplinary connections of dance subjects in Grades 8–12 has been developed and methodologically substantiated.**
2. **Practical testing and demonstrated pedagogical effectiveness: The model was successfully tested at Konstantin Preslavski Secondary School of Humanities and Arts in Varna over a complete five-year cycle of study, culminating in a successful state examination for the award of a third-level vocational qualification.**
3. **Integrated assessment system: Criteria for comprehensive competency-based assessment have been formulated, linked to the vertical progression of training and the intended professional profile of the dancer.**

4. Comments, critical observations and recommendations

The submitted work makes an exceptionally favourable impression through its scope, systematic approach and terminological precision. As a constructive recommendation for the candidate's future publishing and teaching activities, I would suggest the following:

- **Recommendation: The developed educational model and original curricula have considerable potential to be published as an independent methodological guide or monograph. This would facilitate the adoption of the model in other arts schools or specialised secondary schools across the country.**
- **Question for the defence: In the author's view, how might the proposed spiral model of interdisciplinary connections support the integration of digital technologies and multimedia into contemporary dance productions at secondary-school level?**

5. Statement regarding the presence or absence of plagiarism (pursuant to item 2a)

In my capacity as a member of the scientific jury, I confirm that NO PLAGIARISM HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED in the submitted dissertation and its abstract. The work is authentic, properly cites the 139 bibliographic and 24 online sources used, and constitutes an original scholarly and pedagogical achievement of the candidate.

6. Conclusion

The dissertation by Teodora Marincheva Staneva fully meets the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations

for its Implementation, and the Regulations for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees at Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”.

The results achieved, the high relevance of the topic, the rigorous methodology and the original model tested in practice provide ample grounds for my POSITIVE EVALUATION.

I confidently recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury award Teodora Marincheva Staneva the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” in Professional Field 8.3, “Music and Dance Art”, Doctoral Programme “Choreography”.

Date: 1 November 2026

Statement prepared by: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elitsa Lukanova