ACADEMIC OPINION

by

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roslana Ivanova Moravenova-Staneva

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on a dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD)

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

entitled: "DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN DANCE IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM"

Doctoral candidate: TEODORA MARINCHEVA STANEVA

Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", Department of Arts

Academic supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivaylo Ivanov

This opinion has been prepared pursuant to Order No. 598 of 29 September 2026 issued by the Rector of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar". As a member of the scientific jury, I received and carefully examined the doctoral candidate's materials. The submitted dissertation, abstract, statement of contributions, publications on the topic, and scientometric table comply with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its Implementation for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD). Compliance with these requirements enables me to make an objective and comprehensive assessment of the doctoral candidate.

The artistic and professional biography of Teodora Marincheva Staneva demonstrates her consistent development in choreography and dance pedagogy. In 2008, she graduated in Choreography from Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", where she also obtained a bachelor's degree in Journalism in 2010. In 2019, she completed a master's programme in Ballet Directing at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof. Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv. Her professional training has been further enhanced through a pedagogical specialisation in methods of teaching Bulgarian dance in grades V–XII, professional qualification levels, and courses related to planning and organising choreography education.

From 2010 to 2026, Staneva taught contemporary and jazz dance at Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar". During the same period, she also worked at "Konstantin Preslavski" Secondary School for Humanities and Arts in Varna, where she taught contemporary and classical dance and held the position of senior teacher. Her pedagogical activities also include directing Karma Dance Studio, where she served as chief artistic director and choreographer from 2010 to 2025. From 2021 to 2025, she also worked as a dance instructor at the "Badnina 1982" Community Cultural Centre in Sofia.

Teodora Staneva's artistic explorations are reflected in original stage works, including the one-act performance "Omen" and a concert performance featuring Georgi Hristov. Her experience in designing stage costumes and sets complements her choreographic practice and broadens her creative involvement in shaping the stage image. Her achievements have been

recognised with a certificate from the Union of Bulgarian Actors for artistic accomplishments, a certificate for contributing to the reputation of Varna Municipality, and a certificate for her creative work and her students' rankings at the Contemporary Dance World Cup in Bucharest. In 2016, she received a choreography award in the "Classical" category at the 18th National Competition for Classical, Character, Contemporary and Free Dance in Burgas, and in 2018 she was awarded the school's honorary distinction for her overall contribution to its reputation.

Taken together, these facts reveal a combination of choreographic training, pedagogical experience, and artistic practice. Her professional path demonstrates a purposeful pursuit and steady advancement of knowledge and competences, which have found a natural continuation in her research activities.

The dissertation topic, "Development of Modern Dance in the Secondary Education System", is of interest because of its topical relevance and significance for vocational dance education. The dissertation comprises 484 pages and consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and 19 appendices. Each chapter ends with a separate set of conclusions. The main text contains four tables and three figures. The doctoral candidate demonstrates a sound knowledge of the literature relevant to the research topic. The bibliography includes 139 titles in Bulgarian, Russian, and English, as well as 24 online sources.

Analysis of the Content and Principal Issues Addressed in the Chapters

The dissertation is structured into an introduction and three chapters, which successively examine the theoretical foundations of modern dance, the methodological and comparative-pedagogical aspects of its teaching, and their application in a specific educational context. This structure makes it possible to trace the issue from the formation of dance systems to the development and analysis of a curricular model for secondary vocational education.

Chapter One establishes the theoretical and methodological foundations of the dissertation.

The historical overview traces the emergence and development of modern dance and the influence of the ideas of François Delsarte, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, and Rudolf Laban on understandings of the relationship between inner impulse, bodily movement, musical rhythm, and space. The analysis of the techniques of Martha Graham, José Limón, and Lester Horton highlights their distinctive contributions to the development of body awareness, technical stability, and artistic expressiveness.

The examination of international experience in dance education links the historical and methodological foundations to the organisation of teaching. The conclusions substantiate the need for a coherent educational system that integrates classical training, established choreographic techniques, and creative practices, thereby providing a basis for analysing the specific curricular model.

In this chapter, the doctoral candidate demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of modern dance and systematically analyses the specialised issues, drawing pedagogically significant conclusions.

Chapter II. Methodological Foundations and Comparative Analysis of Dance Education Systems

The comparative-historical analysis identifies applicable aspects of American and Russian educational experience and substantiates the need for an adaptable Bulgarian model combining regulatory coherence and technical training with creative freedom and sensitivity to the national cultural context. Thus, the second chapter establishes the methodological foundation for developing a scientifically grounded educational model.

Chapter Three presents the practical application of the dissertation's theoretical and methodological propositions.

Regulatory requirements are linked to curricula, interdisciplinary connections, and the progression of instruction from grades VIII to XII. The spiral model combines a stable core of technical training with varied creative practices, while the proposed assessment framework monitors both students' professional competences and their artistic development.

The doctoral candidate's research in this chapter is distinguished by the systematic transformation of regulatory and methodological propositions into a comprehensive educational model tailored to the specific school environment. The analysis of the model supports the conclusion that it ensures the gradual development of professional competences by combining technical training with creative independence and stage performance.

Assessment of the Scientific and Applied Research Contributions

The dissertation's contributions arise from a comprehensive historical-theoretical, comparative, and regulatory-applied analysis of vocational education for the occupation of Dancer, specialising in Modern Dance. A distinctive aspect of the research is the combination of the author's own experience in developing curricula with their scholarly interpretation and critical analysis. These curricula are the first in the specialisation to have been developed following the entry into force of the Pre-school and School Education Act in 2016. This feature gives the dissertation additional regulatory and practical significance.

The contributions identified collectively support the conclusion that the dissertation offers a reasoned response to a current challenge in vocational dance education: how to reconcile the artistic freedom and diversity of modern dance with coherent, regulation-based training that can be assessed objectively. In response, a comprehensive educational model has been developed that connects the discipline's historical and technical foundations with creative practices and stage work within a progressive learning process.

Of particular value is the scholarly examination of the author-developed curricula and the translation of regulatory requirements into an applicable pedagogical system. The findings have the potential to support the development and improvement of vocational education in Modern Dance.

Recommendation: In view of the systematic development of the research and the practical significance of the proposed educational model, I would recommend that the doctoral candidate continue her work in this field. A promising direction would be to develop the model further at a theoretical level and examine its application in different educational settings, thereby contributing to the refinement of teaching methodology and the expansion of practical training opportunities.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the foregoing, I give a positive assessment of the dissertation entitled “Development of Modern Dance in the Secondary Education System”. I congratulate the doctoral candidate, Teodora Marincheva Staneva, on her consistent and thorough research, as well as her academic supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivaylo Ivanov, for his competent academic supervision and methodological guidance throughout the research process.

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

2 November 2026

Prepared by:
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