

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Violeta Decheva, DSc,
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on the academic works for the competition for Professor in professional direction 8.4 Theater and Film Art, and the academic specialty Film Studies, Film Art and Television (Bulgarian short feature cinema) for the needs of the Cinema, Advertising and Show business Department of the New Bulgarian University, published in State Gazette issue 38/24.04.2020 with candidate Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova, DSc, New Bulgarian University

The submitted academic works and results of conducted researches, combined with the academic, teaching and socially engaged activities of Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova, DSc, fully comply with all requirements of New Bulgarian University for taking the academic position of professor.

Her monograph *Short-form films: Advantages and challenges models and practices of Bulgarian short features*, with which Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova, DSc participates in the competition for the academic rank of professor in New Bulgarian University, is the first ever complete study on the subject of the Bulgarian short-length movies in the field of the Bulgarian Cinema Studies. It is a result of her long-standing, in-depth research practice and aims at tracing the development of this type of filmmaking in the context of the Bulgarian cinema in general, as well as to position this process into the context of the European and global short film cinema.

Each of the four parts of the monograph approaches this topic from a different perspective and when combined, the author's intention is achieved. Thou Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova, DSc, soundly reminds that her work does not pretend to be exhaustive to the subject matter, the overall impression left by reading the monograph is one of the sought after and achieved thoroughness in the process's description. The author strives to encompass all possible sides. And does not jump into conclusions and evaluations prematurely. Instead, she prefers them to be drawn in the course of her observations. We can read them as well in her summaries of the gathered empirical material in each phase of her research. Everywhere in her work Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova, DSc, underlines the development potential of the "short forms" in contemporary cinema and together with the difficulties posed to attracting the attention of the audiences, she emphasizes its advantages. She also strives for a maximum

possible comprehensiveness when presenting facts. I highly value this combination of attentively describing the process, while presenting the controversy in the development of the Bulgarian short-length filmmaking. It plays a vital role in the first ever study of this kind, the endeavor that Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova has embarked on.

In the first part of the monograph a large spectrum of existing definitions of *short film cinema* is presented, ranging from Wikipedia to the latest specialized theoretical publications and researches on this particular type of cinema. By choosing this approach over another (legitimate scientific) method, which begins with a clear and fixed definition and that way predetermining the selection of scientific data and its interpretation from a pre-given point of view, the author takes the advantage to show its controversy.

In the historical retrospective to which the third part of the text, “Histories and Models”, is dedicated, the author insists not only that it is very difficult to narrow down short film cinema to several specificities of the genre and style, but also on the advantages of keeping the boundaries of its definition more flexible.

The development of short film cinema is traced in each period from two perspectives. The first one is the historic one, which describes its origins within the first feature films, created at the very beginning of cinema in Europe and its reception in Bulgaria. The second perspective is the immanently-genre one. It allows to the author to describe how short movies are situated among media and other arts, as well as to show what is their influence on society, how they are received (see *Part II. Social Existence*). This choice of Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova is precious, because it allows seeing the relationship between the two types of cinema: feature-length films and short movies. Everywhere in her text she keeps the line of this comparative analysis with the feature-length films, when presenting the specificities and the reception of short movies in any given period of time. I find this approach of presenting short movies’ history in the context of feature-length cinema as a contribution of the publication, because it demonstrates the dynamics of cinema development in Bulgaria before and after 1989 in general.

The study of all forums, figures, artefacts and tendencies in the Bulgarian short movie filmmaking is conducted by Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova with the typical for all her work scrupulosity. The gathered, analyzed, presented and summarized empirical data is impressive. Her idea to present in details all Bulgarian short movies, created since the 1960s in the *Odeon Cinema* is brilliant.

Assoc. Prof. Alexandrova’s papers and academic articles, published after her habilitation in peer reviewed academic issues, are all dedicated to topics that she has followed

throughout her long-standing path as a professional researcher and critique. Those include, for example, different dimensions of the relationship between contemporary theatre and filmmaking. This is a topic, which I find very important, especially given the deepened interest of the performing arts scene to interact with different filmmaking genres and interdisciplinary approaches in the last decades. This is very typical for the postdramatic theatre. Yet, Assoc. Prof. Alexandrova does not lose sight of film festivals, the development of film industry, its initialization, national participation, etc. It is not by chance that out of the required 80 points in this category, she has gathered 120 points, as well as the number of her works being cited in monographs and collective volumes with academic citing.

Assoc. Prof. Alexandrova is also among the professors with high evaluation by the students, with whom she works on projects, supervises as graduates and Ph.D. candidates, facilitates their traineeships and participates in the creation of academic curriculum. She executes her academic duties diligently and regularly.

I know Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova for a long time. She is among the most established Bulgarian film critiques. I have always value highly her dedication to the Bulgarian cinema, her compulsion towards facts, their precise registration and presentation. This is a rarely met quality in film criticisms especially in the recent years. I am familiar with her career path and the development of her particular interests. Her curiosity towards new phenomenon in cinema and her unexhausted attentiveness towards the links between filmmaking and other arts, theatre in particular, are impressive.

All the above gives me cause to recommend with conviction a *professorship* to be conferred on Assoc. Prof. Petia Alexandrova, DSc.

17th of July 2020

Sofia