

II Book Review

Simona Șomărescu's Books Under the Ancient Precept:

„Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty”

Not long ago, I was offered to read two books, in fact two textbooks, meant to fill a gap in our educational system in the field of classical dance. And, as I do not often come across specialized books (be they textbooks or teaching methods) intelligently written, I am very tempted to reproduce them here in their entirety, because they are the best I have read on this subject, unusually judicious, accurate and well written. But, as this is not possible, I will quote the author's point of view, as I could not paraphrase it more usefully:

Dance is not only an art, but also a discipline, just as pedagogy is not just a discipline, but also an art. However, in order to practice them, talent and, to the same extent, methodical training in an organized setting are needed.

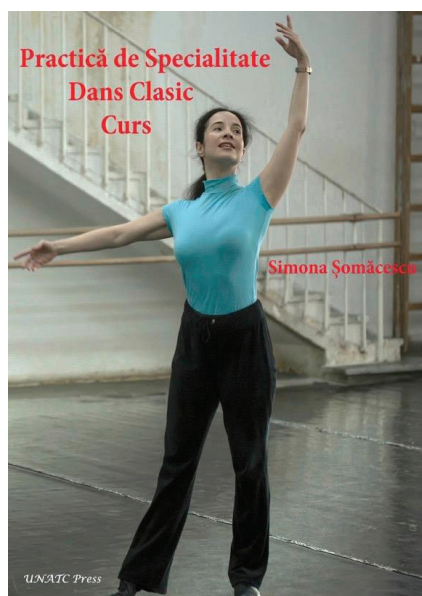
I know I may be asked, what other books could I compare them to? Given the fact that, after the one authored in 1965 by Mrs. Esther Magyar-Gonda, Director of the Choreography High School at the time, nothing has been published in Romania until the books that are the subject of these lines. But I shouldn't, or perhaps I should mention that in other countries on the planet such as France, Russia, Italy, England, United States, etc., such books have continued to appear since the seventeenth century, with the founding of the Royal Academy of Dance in France by Louis XIV, and, therefore, were available scrolling through for those who were really interested.

And so, after a few decades, the question asked at the beginning of my teaching career at the Choreography High School in Bucharest, "After which textbook is ballet taught?", received its answer, materialized in the two courses entitled: ***Methodology of Teaching Classical Dance. Course*** (2019) and ***Specialized Practice. Classical Dance. Course*** (2020), signed by Simona Șomărescu and published at UNATC Press.

Of course, everything I read in them, from language to terminology, from the basic movements of classical dance to the time and manner they should be taught, from the structuring of the Lesson in the two major parts: the first - movements and elements performed at the ballet barre, the second - movements and elements performed in the middle of the classroom (*par terre*, *allegro* and elements performed on *pointes*), from the resources needed for the admission exam to the vocational school, from the glossary of ballet, to the actual Lesson, from its duration to the fundamental notions of classical dance, from its movements and poses to the connecting steps, from jumps and turns to the role of the *répétiteur* and many more that readers will find in the two courses, I was familiar with, as I became acquainted with them, enriching my impressive alphabet of arts during my many years of teaching at the Choreography High School. As a matter of fact, they were and are known and mastered by those who teach this discipline. It's just that, if until a few years ago this transfer of science / art from teacher to student was ensured by the great ballet dancers, who in the meantime became Ballet Masters, trained according to the method of the excellent Vaganova Russian school, the need for specialized education was felt, especially in the training of teachers from an academic education system. I would like to mention in particular the structuring of the second course, which explicitly presents the ballet objectives, movements and elements to be taught each of the eight years of study, as well as a model dance lesson corresponding to each level. And although the Choreography department of UNATC "I.L. Caragiale" was born in the '90s, it was only in 2015 that this blessed project could be started, properly coordinated by Simona Șomărescu and her work.

From my point of view, the courses appeared at the right time, were written the right way, and by the right author. I say this because their writer has traveled and expressed herself performing so far in all the essential stages of classical dance, from high school dance student to first soloist of the Bucharest National Opera, from first soloist to first ballerina of the Romanian National Opera, from the guest dancer on the important stages of the world to the manager of the ONB Ballet Department, from high school teacher to university faculty, also adding each year to





her vocational record a vast experience, absolutely necessary to write such textbooks.

I must confess that reading them was a journey through time, browsing an album full of fragrances, wonders and evocative stories, because since I took my first steps in the Choreography High School, still synonymous for many generations with the Ilie Niculescu-Dorobanțiu house on Lieutenant Dumitru Lemnea Street – in itself a work of art, which reproduces on a smaller scale the castle of Blois of King Louis XII in the Loire Valley - in my free time or in the breaks between my piano lessons I watched fascinated from the balcony of the hall great, the physical modeling of the students, who under my eyes transformed from one month to another, becoming in *no time* dancers coveted by the greatest lyrical stages in the world. Good music, well sung by graceful répétiteurs, gestural elegance, the beauty of the width of movements during exercises, the splendor of the room, the exoticism of the teachers' language in French and Italian terms, which define movements and elements of ballet and music, respectively, all sprung from the album filled with miracles. And when reading each ballet term or the names of the steps between the various movements, I remembered in my visual memory what my soul memory never lost - the execution of the line, the performance and customization of certain soloists, famous names who once delighted our souls.

I can only congratulate Simona Șomărescu for the way she designed these two courses: scientifically, orderly, with the precision of a Swiss watch, but most of all for her cadence and poetry. Therefore, I hope that in the near future I will read a third course, in which she will plead in front of future teachers, this time about the emotional and spiritual training of pupils / students, training that so far fell within the responsibilities of the piano teacher, who, in addition to the instrument itself, in the classroom and with vocation, revealed to students-teachers or teachers-students - *for what is a teacher but an eternal student* - as much as possible from the infinite force of this sovereign of the colossus of feelings and emotions, MUSIC, the most faithful and generous partner of dance. It is just a suggestion.

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