

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
School of Music, Theatre & Dance

Tzveta Kassabova, assistant professor of theatre and drama, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of theatre and drama, with tenure, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

Academic Degrees:

M.F.A.	2009	University of Maryland, Department of Dance
M.S.	2003	University of Maryland, Department of Meteorology
M.S.	1998	Sofia University, Department of Physics

Professional Record:

2016 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre and Drama, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, University of Michigan
2014 – 2016	Assistant Professor, Dance Program, Department of Theatre and Dance Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT
2012 – 2014	Visiting Assistant Professor, School of Theater and Dance, University of Florida
2011 -2012	Adjunct Professor, Department of Theater and Dance, George Washington University
2011	Adjunct Professor, Department of Speech, Dance and Theater, Montgomery College
2010	Visiting Artist, Department of Dance, University of Maryland, Baltimore
2006 – 2009	Graduate Teaching Assistant, Dance Department, University of Maryland College Park

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Kassabova’s innovative pedagogy extends from her research and creative work. Her teaching builds on a personal philosophy in which movement “is a means of communication with others and the world” that “connects us to our truest selves and deepest levels of awareness” (teaching statement). She strives “to turn the classroom into a profoundly imaginative and highly physical place of artistic exploration which allows us to be vulnerable, make mistakes, learn and grow.”

Professor Kassabova’s teaching is particularly impactful because of its placement within the Department of Theatre and Drama acting curriculum. She teaches an advanced, year-long core-curricular sequence for the BFA acting program, namely “Movement for Actors” II and III, and brings a dancer’s insights to acting training as a springboard for her instructional innovations. Just as importantly, she sets the highest standards of artistic achievement for her students, while modeling her own exploration of the world through movement. Professor Kassabova regularly teaches Introduction to Acting (chiefly to non-SMTD students), as well as advanced special topics seminars. She also teaches advanced Modern Dance Technique and advises MFA thesis projects in the Dance Department – an extraordinary testament to the high regard she enjoys in the field of

Dance Studies. Her energy, enthusiasm, and engagement with students is widely praised. She is valued by students as an inspiring learning catalyst and a caring mentor.

Professional Activities: A multidisciplinary thinker and doer, Professor Kassabova describes herself as a “choreographer, performer, costume designer, installation artist, teacher, and in fact whatever else is needed to create my work.” She imagines and realizes multi-media, site-specific projects that interrogate ideas from scientific concepts to social constructs. She arrived at UM with a long and acclaimed history of accomplishments as a performer and choreographer with major U.S. dance companies, including extensive national and international tours. Her extraordinary productivity has continued at UM. Since joining the faculty, she has created, choreographed, and/or performed in more than forty large-scale original works.

Professor Kassabova’s research includes site-specific multimedia works with community impact. She develops much of her work in partnership with notable artists from dance, music, theatre and design and in prestigious venues including the Kennedy Center and Dance Place in Washington, D.C. Working with The Shua Group, she co-founded Andy, a community-engaged performance venue in Detroit’s Hope Village neighborhood. For a UNESCO World Heritage site in Essen, Germany, she created a site specific work with the PEARSONWIDRIG DANCE THEATER. With the Shua Group, she created Flower Flour, for an abandoned flour mill in Nay, France. More recently, she worked with Sociology professor Paul Draus (U-M Dearborn) to realize Tangled: Stage for All, combining U-M students with those from the Motor City Street Dance Academy to create an outdoor event for the Detroit Month of Design 2020.

Service: Professor Kassabova has a solid service record and has contributed generously to the administrative needs of her department and SMTD. She views service as “important to my professional growth” and has been strategic in her activity and deepening involvement. Professor Kassabova is deeply involved in student recruitment. She has been featured in a Faculty Showcase Concert for prospective students and participates annually in auditions for the BFA Acting and Interarts programs. In response to COVID-19, she developed an online audition assessment process for movement skills. Professor Kassabova has served on several SMTD-wide faculty committees, including Global Engagement, the student grant evaluation committee of the Arts Entrepreneurship and Leadership Program, and the school’s undergraduate curriculum committee. In 2018, she was a member of the stage combat faculty search committee, and, currently, she serves as the chair of the search committee for a new faculty colleague focused on acting for the camera.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: “In Murakami by the Sea, the combination of text and movement; absurdity and reality; humor and humanity; visual textures and reveals - was completely brilliant....I find what she does so riveting, radically humane and always embracing and surprising, I never wanted to stop watching and reading!”

Reviewer B: “Every time I scan professor Kassabova’s dossier again I find something else notable to write about or highlight. The fact is she is exceptional.”

Reviewer C: “I believe the University of Michigan is quite fortunate to have Prof. Kassabova in their midst. She is clearly an artist of national and international repute, who will continue to add to the brilliance of the university’s already stellar Dance/Theater/Music faculty.”

Reviewer D: “She has been prolific, creating and producing works in a range of venues (both in site specific arenas and in traditional theaters). Her work is of a consistently high level both in terms of technical acuity, potent and unique expressivity, and rigorous specificity of movement invention.”

Reviewer E: “While Tzveta has clearly done important work within her position in academia, she has not sequestered herself there. Rather it is clear that she continues to seek out a wide range of opportunities to share her artistic work and exchange ideas with those both inside and outside institutions of higher ed.”

Reviewer F: “She is an artist who combines great pedagogical abilities, exceptional choreographic skill and an impressive history as a dancer with some of our field’s top artists... She is a captivating and poignant performer who elevates the content and humanness of any work she inhabits.”

Reviewer G: “It was first in her ferocious dancing that I sensed an inimitable blend of rigor and freedom which I see applied across her output, from teaching to choreography to community work...Her creative and scholarly offerings are intertwined and reside at a very high level...she is a new kind of artist and educator. It is the interrelatedness of everything she does and its focus on issues and people that define her work. This would include her service to the field and her academic service.”

Reviewer H: “Kassabova has a solid collection of work as a creator. She appears to bring a dedication to quality of work, thoughtfulness of message, and high standards of technique and detail for her students and audiences. She has had a multi-faceted background with an unusual path to her dance artistry, both international and multi-disciplinary. Her experience as a gymnast, along with her study in physics and then meteorology surface through her work as an artist in intriguing ways.”

Reviewer I: “Tzveta is an outstanding artist/educator who is committed to sharing her practice(s), experience, questions, processes and methods with her students while at the same time challenging them and herself to go beyond the comfort zone and familiar limits. If there-ever was a person who thrives in collaboration it is Tzvetta, and as such she sets a remarkable example of conjuring and maintaining long term collaborative relationships across disciplines and geographical divides.”

Reviewer J: “While teaching she has created eight new dance theatre works, choreographed three theatre productions, and organized an international tour for eight students in Bulgaria and Romania. And if that isn’t enough, she also performed as a professional dancer/collaborator with PEARSONWIDRIG DANCE THEATRE (a highly respected and well-known dance company)...Tzveta is making important contributions through her scholarly research in the areas of dramatic performance, choreography, directing, and presenting.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Kassabova is a relentlessly creative, multidisciplinary artist who works at the highest levels of artistry with prestigious collaborators in equally prestigious venues, nationally and across the globe. A skilled collaborator, she propels and accelerates the achievements of peers and her students alike through a commitment to movement as both a process of discovery and a language of human communication. She is a transformative teacher at SMTD, and a generous citizen of UM, whose service record is appropriate for her rank, engaged and effective. With the unanimous support of the school's Executive Committee, I strongly recommend Tzveta Kassabova for promotion to the rank of associate professor of theatre and drama, with tenure, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.



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David Gier  
Paul Boylan Collegiate Professor of Music  
and Dean, School of Music, Theatre & Dance

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