

REVIEW

by

Assoc. Prof Ivaylo Mihaylov

AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev"

professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

on the dissertation of

Zhang Yuen

titled

Influence and References of the European Classical Art Songs on the Chinese Vocal Works

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

in a professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

academic supervisor: Prof. Dr. Toni Shekerjieva-Novak

The dissertation work was discussed and proposed for public defense at a meeting of the Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performing Arts at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", the city of Plovdiv, held on 25.06.2024. It has a total volume of 161 pages, organized into introduction, three chapters, conclusion, contributions, acknowledgments, bibliography and three appendices. The bibliography includes 46 titles in several languages. The actual research part of the work, as well as the analysis of the chamber-vocal works, is supported and illustrated by 9 sheet music examples.

Zhang Yuen has an impressive resume. She is a mezzo-soprano, a professor of vocal music, deputy director of the Middle School of the Shenyang Academy of Music, and a visiting professor at the Hebei University of Ethnic Minorities.

She is a doctoral student at the Academy of Music and Dance Art in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, under the supervision of Prof Toni Shekerjieva-Novak.

Zhang Yuen was admitted to the Shenyang Academy of Music in 2007. In 2010, she obtained a Master's degree and remained at the academy as a teacher. She has participated in many international and national vocal competitions and has won many awards. It is noteworthy that she was awarded not only as a performer, but also as a teacher. Some of them are listed in her biography:

- Gold medal winner of the Liaoning Province Television Young Singers Competition;
- First prize in the teacher category of the Pattaya International Vocal Competition, Thailand;
- First prize in the teacher category of the China-Korea International Vocal Competition;
- Third prize in the bel canto teacher category of the Second National Competition for Teachers and Doctoral Students in Vocal Performance from Higher Education Institutions.

Her students have repeatedly won awards in international and national vocal competitions.

Zhang Yuen has held numerous solo concerts, opera duets and educational music concerts. She has been invited to perform in Singapore, South Korea, and the United States on numerous occasions.

She has compiled and published "Selected Songs of Aaron Copland." She has published two monographs and over ten articles in major national magazines.

Obviously, the doctoral student's interest in chamber music performance, and in particular - in European classical art songs and the peculiarities of their interpretation, guided her to the choice of the topic of the current dissertation. Her in-depth knowledge of both cultures is an additional prerequisite for this choice.

This dissertation has a total of six chapters. The first chapter mainly introduces the development of the European classical art songs. The second chapter focuses on the development of the Chinese vocal music, genre, and research on vocal performance. The third, fourth, and fifth chapters analyze the influence of German, French, and Italian art songs on the Chinese vocal works, respectively. Chapter six explains the reference and influence of the European classical art songs on the Chinese vocal works, which makes the topic relevant.

In the choice of topic and in the way in which the research material is developed and presented, two main directions are clearly distinguished, outlining the specifics of its contribution.

The first concerns a detailed and comprehensive review of the development of the Chinese vocal music. A definition of art song is given, and the author considers art songs arranged and composed on the basis of folk songs, poems, narrative art songs, and analyzing aesthetics.

The candidate offers a review of the development of the European classical art: Early European art songs, Development of the European art song writing, important achievements of Schubert, the contribution of Schumann, as well as the late boom of the European art song.

The second direction, outlining the nature of the contributions of the dissertation work and leading to the proof of the author's thesis, is based on an analysis of the influence and reference of European classical art songs to Chinese vocal works.

The doctoral student points out that *the dissemination and performance of European classical academic songs builds a bridge for cultural exchange between China and Europe.*" and that *"at the same time, the Chinese vocal music community also enriches its own musical cultural heritage by learning and borrowing from European classical academic songs, and promotes the international development of Chinese vocal music."*

The study discusses the cultural exchange between the Eastern and the Western modern aesthetics from a historical perspective and the new ways of thinking that are opened up for musical composition. It shows the comprehensive influence of European classical academic songs on Chinese vocal music. This influence is not only manifested in the style and techniques of musical works, but also in their profound enlightenment in many aspects such as the aesthetics of the Chinese vocal art, the promotion of education, and cultural exchange.

The most important contribution, in my opinion, is the horizon that the doctoral student provides for the future, where "*the Chinese vocal scene will continue to absorb and take example from the advantages and characteristics of European classical vocal music to promote the continuous development of Chinese vocal art*".

I accept the contributions of the dissertation work presented at the end of the work as credible and practically applicable.

The doctoral student has the following publications on the topic:

Overview of the Development of the Chinese Vocal Music – Spring Scientific Readings 2021, AMDFA, ISSN 1314-7005, pp. 151-157

Research on the Vocal Singing Skills and the Stage Arts, Jiuzhou – 2021, ISSN 978-5108-9799-3 -monograph

Research on the Diverse Development and Teaching of Chinese Art Songs from a New Perspective – The New Voice of Yue-Fu, 2022, September 2022, pp. 119-122, ISSN 1001-5736

On the European Classical Art Songs and the Chinese Vocal Works – Modern Music, December 2022, ISSN 1007-2233, pp. 23-25.

In conclusion, my opinion on Zhang Yuen's dissertation work *Influence and References of the European Classical Art Songs on the Chinese Vocal Works* is that it is a large-scale, comprehensive and in-depth work with undoubted scientific and applied value and a valuable contribution to the performance and teaching practice in Bulgaria and China.

Based on everything that has been said so far, I strongly suggest to the respected scientific jury to award Zhang Yuen the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3. – Music and Dance Art.

Plovdiv, 10.09.2024

Assoc. Prof Ivaylo Mihaylov