

OPINION

By Assoc. Prof Rositsa Dimitrova Becheva,

New Bulgarian University,

on dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

in Professional direction 8.3. Music and Dance Art

Doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

of **Zhang Yuen**

doctoral student at the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts,

the Faculty of Music Pedagogy of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev"

on the topic:

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

Academic supervisor: Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak

General presentation of the procedure and the materials presented for review

The provided documents and materials under the procedure for review and defense of educational and scientific degree Doctor by Zhang Yuen, are complete and correct and meet the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations for its implementation and the regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions in AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv.

The doctoral student has presented the following materials: CV, dissertation, abstract, list of publications on the topic of the dissertation, reference for contributions, enrollment order, discharging order, scientific jury order.

Brief biographical data for the candidate:

Zhang Yuae: mezzo-soprano, professor of vocal music, deputy director of the Middle School of the Shenyang Academy of Music, visiting professor at the Hebei University of Ethnic Minorities.

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

Educational background: In 2007, Zhang Yuen was admitted to the Shenyang Academy of Music to pursue a Master's degree. She graduated in 2010 and remains at the academy as a lecturer.

Awards: Zhang Yuen has participated in international and national vocal competitions many times and has won many awards: gold medalist 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 from Higher Education Institutions, etc.

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

has held numerous solo concerts, opera duets and educational music concerts. She has been repeatedly invited to participate in music concerts in Singapore, South Korea, the United States and other countries.

Zhang Yuen is the author of scientific publications and works: she compiled and published "Selected Songs of Aaron Copland", published two monographs and over ten articles in well-known national magazines.

Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions

The dissertation is 163 pages long, and its structure includes: Introduction, six chapters, Conclusion, Contributions, Bibliography – a total of 46 sources (46 foreign language titles), Appendices (musical examples of works by German, French and Italian authors), scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation.

The **Introduction** formulates the object, subject, goal, and objectives of the research, and the reasons for choosing the topic are set out:

“In the development of the long history of music in Europe, European art songs have a special status and have become a type of music with profound artistic achievements in the professional musical field. Art songs are not only unique in the musical genre, but also have a profound influence on the development of the world vocal art. Vocal works in different periods bring us different musical insights.” (p. 3)

The **object** of the study is European art songs, which *“with their own unique charm, influence people’s appreciation and knowledge of contemporary vocal art not only in Europe but throughout the world. The strict or free musical attitude in art songs, the melodic structures filled with the charm of classical music, and the bold creative styles during the Renaissance – all of them reflect to a great extent on the shaping and influence of today’s Chinese vocal art”* (p. 3)

The **subject** of the scientific study is the reflection of the European art songs on contemporary Chinese vocal art.

The **aim** of the study *“is based on the influence of the characteristics and achievements of classical European vocal music on Chinese vocal music.”* (p. 3)

The study sets a number of **tasks**, including:

– a commentary on the cultural exchange between the Eastern and the Western modern aesthetics from a historical perspective and the new paths of thought that are opening up for musical composition, as well as for the development of the Chinese vocal art.

The methodology of the study includes a review of scientific literature on the topic, a study of materials, including a large number of books and monographs.

Methods of comparison, analysis are used, and by following the factual circumstances, future trends in the aspect of international cultural exchange are predicted.

In the **first chapter**, The Development of European Classical Art Songs, offers a historical review of art songs, the development of the European classical art songs, and the European art songs

with typical representative meaning.

It explains that: “In the practice of artistic work, the authors of art songs, through the content, not only reveal their vision of life, but also strive to create an aesthetic fashion that adapts to the new era.

All this is done on the basis of inheriting the national aesthetic taste and art, which can be enjoyed by both “*the people from the upper strata of society and the masses.*” (p. 5)

This chapter presents the characteristics of the European art songs: by genre, theme, purpose, types of art songs and their aesthetics, the transition from traditional to contemporary music.

In **chapter two**, Overview of the Development of the Chinese Vocal Music, attention is focused on the development of the Chinese vocal music, the development of the Chinese vocal music during the late Qing Dynasty and the PRC, the genre and vocal performance.

Of particular importance are the texts presenting the correlation: historical conditions and social environment – development of vocal music – genre features and aesthetics of the created music. In this regard, periods of the ancient Chinese vocal music are examined and a comparative analysis is made regarding the development of the vocal music during the dynasties: Qing, Han, Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang, Ming and Qing dynasties, during the late Qing Dynasty and the PRC.

The third, fourth and fifth chapters analyze the influence of German, French and Italian art songs on the Chinese vocal works.

Chapter three, The Influence of German Art Songs on Chinese Vocal Works, examines the main features and artistic value of the German art songs, the influence of the German art songs on the Chinese vocal music.

Chapter four, The Influence and Relationship between French Art Songs and Chinese Vocal Works, examines the development of the French art songs, their singing and style, the artistic characteristics and value of the French art songs, the reference value of the French art songs in vocal works - on the example of Fauré.

Chapter five, The Influence of Italian Art Songs on Chinese Vocal Works, examines the emergence and development of Italian art songs, their stylistic characteristics, and the influence of Italian art songs on Chinese vocal music.

In chapters three, four, and five, the analysis also focuses on the interpretative features, the necessary singing skills, and vocal training.

Chapter six, The Influence and Reference of European Classical Art Songs on Chinese Vocal Works, explains the reference and influence of the European classical art songs on the Chinese vocal works. The analysis also focuses on the melody, lyrics, and formal and structural features.

The **Conclusion** summarizes the main conclusions and recommendations.

Contributions and significance of the scientific work and publications on its topic

The dissertation under consideration is an in-depth study on a current topic, directly related to

the performing and pedagogical practice of the doctoral student, developed in accordance with the requirements for a scientific text, in which the relevant terminology is correctly used, and the references are based on a wide range of sources. The author's personal point of view and ideas, the analyses and comparisons made, the conclusions formulated are presented in a systematized presentation.

The appendices complement the main text.

I accept the contributions of the work brought out by the doctoral student, including:

1. The spread and performance of European classical academic songs builds a bridge for cultural exchange between China and Europe.

2. The study comments on the cultural exchange between the Eastern and the Western modern aesthetics, from a historical perspective and the new paths of thought that are opened for musical composition.

3. The comprehensive influence of European classical academic songs on Chinese vocal music is shown.

The four publications presented on the doctoral thesis meet the requirements in terms of content:

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

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

3. *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

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

The abstract consists of 46 pages and conveys the nature of the doctoral work.

In conclusion:

I give my positive assessment to Zhang Yuen's dissertation work, *Influence and References of the European Classical Art Songs on the Chinese Vocal Works* relation to its contributions of scientific and applied qualities. I believe that the dissertation work of the doctoral student fully meets the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 8.3."Music and Dance Art under the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria Act and I propose to the respected scientific jury that it be awarded to her.

12.09.2024, Sofia

Assoc. Prof Rositsa Becheva