

OPINION

by

Prof Elena Karaliyska-Trapkova, PhD

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on the dissertation of

Zhang Yuen

doctoral student full-time study

in professional field 8. 3. Music and Dance Art

Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performance Arts

at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv

academic supervisor: Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak

titled

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

for awarding educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**"

On the grounds of a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Music Pedagogy (Protocol No. 3/ 25.06.2024), to open a procedure for the defense of the dissertation work of Zhang Yuen, the following materials were provided to me: the candidate's CV, the dissertation, an abstract, a report on the contributions of the dissertation, a list of publications on the topic.

Brief biographical data of the candidate

Zhang Yuen is a professor of vocal music, deputy director of the Middle School of Shenyang Academy of Music, and a visiting professor at the Hebei University of Ethnic Minorities.

In 2010, Zhang Yuen graduated from the Shenyang Conservatory of Music with a Master's degree, after which she received an offer to start teaching. She participated in national and international vocal competitions: she won the Gold Medal of the Liaoning Provincial Television Competition for Young Singers, the First Prize in the Teacher Category of the Pattaya International Vocal Competition, the First Prize in the Teacher Category of the Sino-Korean International Vocal Competition, and the Third Prize in the Bel Canto Teacher Category of the Second National Competition for Teachers and Doctoral Students in Singing from Higher Education Institutions. Zhang Yuen gives solo recitals and participates in concerts in China, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States. Her pedagogical successes have been crowned with numerous awards won by her students in national and international vocal competitions. Zhang Yuen has published two monographs and over ten articles in well-known national journals. She has compiled and published in China a collection of selected songs by Aaron Copland.

The doctoral student's research interest is in chamber-vocal works. Zhang Yuen analyzes the musical characteristics of the performance styles of Claude Debussy, Gabriel Fauré, Georges Bizet, Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini. She also examines and studies the "*methods of vocal technique*

and voice training", the role and significance of Abt's vocal etudes in vocal music education. Her publications are part of the scientific topic of various universities in China.

In the period 2021-2024, Zhang Yuen is a full-time doctoral student at the AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv with scientific supervisor Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak.

The choice of the topic of the dissertation is determined by the creative searches of the author as a performer and teacher in the field of art song in Europe and China.

The presented work is relevant with its topic, dedicated to the influence and references of the European classical art songs on the Chinese vocal works. The author traces scientifically, comprehensively and systematically the historical facts, musical styles, genre specificity and linguistic features of the European classical art songs. She summarizes the challenges faced by young singers and offers methods for their mastery. Integration of the experience of Europe and China is sought in the direction of promoting international cultural exchange.

Content of the dissertation

The dissertation *The Influence and References of the European Classical Art Songs on the Chinese Vocal Works* is structured in an Introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography including 46 titles, and four publications on the topic. The total volume is 160 pages, of which 142 are the main text. Sheet music examples of works by German, French, and Italian authors are attached.

In the Introduction, Zhang Yuen presents the reasons for choosing the topic, content, methods, and purpose of the study.

Chapter One presents a large-scale historical review of the emergence and development of the European classical art songs. It outlines the characteristics of the main genres and examines the vocal work of significant European composers.

In Chapter Two, the author focuses on the emergence and development of the Chinese vocal music. She points out the diversity of forms of national vocal art, the genre and thematic richness. She draws attention to the stylistic characteristics of the artistic expression and pays special attention to the Chinese opera and its distinctive features. The conclusions drawn indicate the specificity of vocal performance in different musical genres.

Chapter Three examines the influence of the German art songs on the Chinese vocal works. Particular attention is paid to the work of Franz Schubert and the importance of his art songs in building professional skills among young singers in China.

Chapter Four focuses on the influence and relationship between the French art songs and the Chinese vocal works. In this chapter, the doctoral student has selected and studied iconic works by Gabriel Fauré. Pointing out the importance and necessity of their study, Zhang Yuen emphasizes: "*Understanding the cultural meanings and emotions contained in them can improve the cultural and musical achievements of the students*" (p. 113).

Chapter Five discusses the emergence and development of the Italian art songs. It analyzes the stylistic characteristics and genre specificity. The peculiarities of the poetic language and the

keyboard accompaniment are examined. The connotation on the creation of the Chinese vocal works is traced.

Chapter Six summarizes the influence of the European classical art songs on the Chinese vocal works. Their role in building professional skills in young singers is emphasized.

In conclusion, the author writes: "*...The European classical academic songs ... had a profound impact on the Chinese vocal music. This influence is manifested not only in the 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*" (p.143).

The scope and content of **Zhang Yuen's** dissertation demonstrate depth and detail in the study of the issues. I would make a recommendation in the direction of refining and detailing the musical terminology.

I **fully support** the stated contributions of the dissertation.

The study has scientific value and practical applicability. It contributes new empirical data and analytical methods to the field of Chinese art song research, thereby enriching the academic resources in this field. The dissemination and performance of European classical academic songs helps build a bridge for cultural exchange between China and Europe.

The abstract corresponds to the dissertation.

The scientific publications are four in number and are related to the topic of the dissertation.

I congratulate the doctoral student and her scientific supervisor. The creative collaboration between Zhang Yuan and Prof. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak is another proof of the fruitful cooperation in the field of musical art between Chinese and Bulgarian universities.

I strongly propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Zhang Yuan the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the professional field 8. 3. Music and Dance Art.

19.08. 2024

Prof Elena Karaliyska-Trapkova, PhD