

## REVIEW

Prof Lyudmil Borisov Petkov, PhD  
of dissertation work for  
awarding educational and scientific degree Doctor  
Professional field **8.3. Music and Dance Art**  
Doctoral program **Music Studies and Music Art**  
Department of Piano and Accordion  
Faculty of Music Pedagogy  
AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv

Titled:

*Universal and National in the Piano Music of China in 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

Author: **Guo Rui**

with academic supervisor: **Assoc. Prof Velislava Angelova Karagenova**

### **1. General presentation of the procedure and the materials presented for review**

The documentation of the procedure for the defense before a scientific jury of a dissertation work with author Yihan Gao is completely in order. The following statutory mandatory documents are presented:

1. Order No RD-27-029/16.02.2024 for the appointment of a scientific jury by the Rector of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv.
2. Order No RD-012/25.01.2024 for discharge, based on the decision taken by the faculty council at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy - Protocol No 16/16.02.2024.
3. Dissertation work consisting of 182 pages. The structure of the work is Introduction, four chapters, Conclusion, Contributions, Bibliography. The cited literature includes 76 titles, 66 from Chinese sources, 6 from Bulgarian sources, 1 from an English source and 3 Internet sources.
4. Abstract of 55 pages with introduction, four chapters, conclusion, contributions, bibliography
5. List of the author's publications related to the dissertation, 3 in number.
6. CV

### **2. Brief biographical data**

*Guo Rui's Education and Professional Experience*

In 2012, she is accepted in piano major at Harbin Normal University. In 2016, she enters the Harbin Normal University as a Master of Arts, studied at the Harbin Conservatory of Music.

In 2017, she works as a piano teacher in the National Instrumental Music Department of the Harbin Conservatory of Music.

In 2018, she joined the Professional Piano Committee of the China Heilongjiang Musicians Association

In 2019, he worked as a piano teacher at Yibin College in Sichuan Province.

In the period 2021-2024, she is a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Piano and Accordion - AMDGA, Plovdiv. Her average passing grade for the exams is 6.00. Research supervisor: Assoc. Prof Velislava Karagenova.

*Artistic work and awards*

Guo Rui has performed numerous concerts in Plovdiv and the country.

*Awards:*

- 2021 National Academic Competition "J. S. Bach and his contemporaries" – honourable mention.
- 2021 ART-DUO International Music Competition for violin and piano duo, Prague, Czech Republic – second prize.
- 2022 International Competition for Young Musicians Zagreb 2022 – second prize in the Piano category.
- 2022 International competition for music, dance and visual arts "Orpheus Talents" - Gold medal for piano and violin ensemble.
- Translates into Chinese the Regulations for participation in the International Competition "J.S. Bach Soli Deo Gloria".

### **3. Relevance of the topic**

As a successful attempt to achieve an adequate understanding of the Chinese musical culture, by tracing the processes and formulation of the characteristics of the Chinese national style in the keyboard music, as a cultural phenomenon clarified in the interaction between national and universal, revealed through the reflection of the aesthetic sensibility and spirituality influencing and influenced by the other spheres of the Chinese culture and especially in the scope of the study connecting the timeliness, derived as a necessity from the stages of formation of the national style, from the era, time, historical prerequisites and socio-political space merged into an organic whole, I consider the condition of relevance of the researched topic for fulfilled.

### **4. Expediency of the research methods used to achieve the set goals**

Relying on a carefully researched and analyzed wide range of current scientific literature, reaching analytical agreement in the generalizations, conclusions and insights about the object and subject of her research, the doctoral student brings out a clear result about the changes and evolution in the appearance and perception of the piano art in China, as part of world musical and cultural processes.

The research methods that the candidate indicates in his introduction include:

- Review of scientific literature sources
- Historical research method

- Comparative research method

They correspond to the goals set in the dissertation, the methodology used is in their adequate support.

## **5. Evaluation of the dissertation**

The first thing one notices when reading the dissertation is that it is carefully "composed". The good balance between its constituent parts is not formally distributed quantitatively, but in relation to the necessary weight, so that the work "sounds" in its entirety.

The introduction defines the essential parameters of the study, in accordance with the standards necessary for a work of this nature. Its close connection with the subsequent development of the dissertation shows that it was the object of attention and refinement throughout the course of work. The complex and multi-layered processes taking place in the Chinese musical culture are placed in the dialogue correspondence with the choice of the theme itself.

In the first chapter, the points that clarify the role of the piano in the general cultural life of China are set. The cultural-historical background of the country is not described in isolation, but in its strict interrelationship with the European culture as a whole. The historical-cultural and political-social climate during the Qing Dynasty and the cultural reform of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao are characterized in depth and detail, presented in the emphasis of ideological enlightenment towards the desire for the emancipation of thinking and its transformation in relation to a new type of world perception, directly related to development of music education. Li Shutong's role in the modern Chinese art appears as a collective image in the practices not only of the "philosophy of self-discipline" typical of the Chinese culture, but also in a new kind of syntheticity and universality aimed at the building of individuals facing national self-consciousness. Precise language and a good culture of expression contribute to the adequate perception of the logical continuum, going beyond the limit of simple description and derived from the knowledge of the studied processes in depth.

In the Second and Third chapters of the work, the birth of the piano music culture in China (1915-1949) and the piano music there in the period (1949-1976) are discussed. The large information load in these chapters is controlled through the strict plan of the exposition. The plays selected for illustration give visibility to the "Chinese concept" originating in the desire for a national image. The musical analyses offered are professionally constructed, with established terminology and attention to detail. I consider the connection of the results of the activity and the formation of a clear concept of the development of the Chinese piano music in its quest for a national identity to be a good achievement, with the role of the Russian pianist, composer and pedagogue Alexander Tcherepin and the norms mentioned in the Introduction, described by Mikhail Druskin, as a guideline for learning the ancient layers of folklore and its idiom, which is in active dialogue with the foreign techniques and genre forms.

Apparently, Guo Rui possesses enviable professional and theoretical competence to build the level of her theoretical work with such balance and symmetry. All this is again supported, both in the revealing the characteristic trends focused in the selection of the analyses of the selected as landmark works, as well as in the conclusions and generalizations related to the progressively increasing qualitative changes in the piano music of China in the twentieth century.

The last chapter of the work traces the period of the so-called "opening" (from 1976 to the present day). Here, the priority is in the modern vision and critical reading in the meaningful upgrading of the standards defining the unfolding of the national-universal beginning in its dynamics and non-uniform essence. Guo Rui's whole approach to achieving the goals set in the work is creative, shows a high degree of knowledge in their adoption and application, and meaningfully rehabilitates the preliminary challenge in the statement of a necessary, timely and serious scientific work.

### **6. Contributions and significance of the thesis**

I fully accept the contributions listed by the doctoral student as essential and scientifically supported in the work. In my opinion, item 2 and item 3 of these should be combined, since without their presence in each other they would not be sufficiently well represented individually.

1. . This dissertation systematically describes the history of the development of the Chinese keyboard music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, within the context of the search for national identity.
2. It offers summaries and conclusions about the development of keyboard music according to the selected issues.
3. The dissertation offers detailed analysis of representative piano works, important for the development of the studied processes. These are works showing the directions and trends for the development of the Chinese music in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Using this analysis, we can travel through time and space, have a "dialogue" with the composer, and when we understand every detail of the works, we can also understand the reason why these works occupy an important place in the Chinese music history.
4. In addition to the specific analyses, a huge amount of piano works that find a place in the repertoire of Chinese pianists and become part of the pedagogical repertoire in educational institutions are also covered.

### **7. Recommendations and critical remarks**

1. When formulating the scientific hypothesis, to expand the scope of the details that form it, in order to highlight the "hidden" moment, the statement beyond the obvious facts, whose sharp discussion brings out and builds the subject of the new knowledge.

2. As a valuable source of information for other studies on the topic and due to its cultural, scientific and educational value, I recommend publishing the work in a book after the relevant editing.

### **8. Abstract**

The abstract adequately presents the content of the main work and correctly provides its semantic context

### **CONCLUSION**

**The doctoral student demonstrates high professional competence, maturity and culture of expression, which combined with the in-depth analysis and scientifically achieved research results give me the reason to vote “in favour” and propose to the respected scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art to Guo Rui.**

I congratulate Yihan Gao and his scientific supervisor Prof Velislava Karagenova, PhD for the result of their joint work.

25.03.2024  
Plovdiv

Reviewer: .....  
Prof Lyudmil Petkvo, PhD