

OPINION

by

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in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art,

doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

for dissertation work **Huang Boyu**

Department of Piano and Accordion

AMDFA Prof Asen Diamandiev, Plovdiv

academic supervisor Prof Lyudmil Petkov, PhD,

titled: *Characteristics and Development of the Piano Accompaniment in the Vocal Music of the Chinese Composers from the 20th century to the Present Day*

1. General presentation of the procedure and the materials received for review

By decision of the Faculty Council at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy of 06.07.2023 a procedure for the defense of Huang Boyu's dissertation work was opened, and by order RD-27-093 of 07.07.2023, I was provided with the necessary materials: CV of the candidate, dissertation, abstract, report on the contributions of the dissertation, list of publications on the topic, etc. Huang Boyu was enrolled in full-time doctoral studies at the Piano and Accordion Department in October 2020, with Prof Ludmil Petkov as supervisor. I know the candidate's work from the first months of the preparatory class preceding the enrollment in the doctoral program, because of his good cooperation with the PhD singers, with whom he participated in academic competitions and general appearances on the concert podium. The successes achieved certainly motivated the choice of topic for Huang Boyu's dissertation.

2. Biographical data of the candidate

Huang Boyu is born in 1991 in China. He completed Bachelor's program in Tianjin Conservatory of Music, China in 2014, majoring in piano. From 2015 to 2019, he studied at the Conservatory of Music Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, Fermo, Italy, where he graduated with two Master's degrees - Piano, Performing Arts and Piano Accompaniment. His doctoral studies at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" conducted under the supervision of Prof Lyudmil Petkov, who motivated him not only in his scientific, but also in his performing career. Huang Boyu actively participated in the concert life of the Academy, and his most notable appearance was in the closing concert - The Academy Invites Plovdiv, part of the large-scale project Made at the Academy, realized on the stage of the Ancient Theater. I would also like to mention the concert with Chinese vocal works titled "I Miss my Motherland", held together with the wonderful singers, now doctors - Li Minhui, Wang Shuaitong and Wang Ye.

3. Relevance of the topic

The dissertation deals with the characteristics and development of the piano accompaniment in the vocal music of the Chinese composers from the 20th century to the present day. "*Among this diverse vocal music, the piano is invariably present as an independent and at the same time inseparable part of the vocal performance*" (p. 1 of the dissertation). The rapid development of the vocal genre in the Chinese school of composition is a good field for research work. I believe that the dissertation of the doctoral student Huang Boyu is relevant and timely and would contribute to clarifying the previous scientific research devoted to this topic.

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

Using selected examples, the research studies and analyzes the piano accompaniment from the 20th century to the present day in terms of three of its varieties: in the Chinese art song, in the musical adaptation of classical verses, and in the Chinese traditional opera. The author uses empirical, theoretical and comparative methodology, through which he achieves a "*more complete and comprehensive understanding of the development logic and characteristics of the piano accompaniment in the Chinese vocal music works and of the specific manifestations and functions of piano accompaniment in different types of vocal works*" (page 9).

5. Evaluation of the dissertation work

The dissertation is structured in an introduction and four chapters. The author has combined in a separate – fifth chapter: conclusion, bibliography consisting of 32 titles, 16 internet sources, appendices, as well as three publications on the topic. The text is total of 190 pages, of which 169 are the main text. The introduction presents the main purpose and motivation for choosing the topic, as well as the research done so far on the topic. The object of the research and its methods are outlined and the research objectives are set. The main objectives of the study are:

- research of the existing studies related to the history of the Chinese musical culture in the last hundred years;
- complex selection of the sources and reference literature dedicated to the Chinese art songs, musical adaptations of classical poems and traditional operas;
- an in-depth analysis of the similarities and differences between these three vocal genres, that would offer a new, theoretically grounded understanding of the Chinese national music that will benefit the future researchers;
- study of the development and the national specificity of the Chinese piano accompaniment through concrete analyses and practical examples of piano accompaniment in art songs, vocal adaptations of ancient poems and Chinese national opera.

The research hypotheses outlined by the author are intended to direct him to an in-depth analysis and study of the chosen topic.

The first chapter explores the origin of the concept of "art song", examining the origin and historical development of this genre in China. For this purpose, seven works by Chinese composers, representative of different periods from the appearance of the genre in the country in 1919 to the present day, were analyzed. It pays special attention to the special importance of the relationship between text and music and traces the importance of the accompaniment to the creation of the overall artistic image. Based on a serious analysis, the candidate draws the following conclusions:

- The texture of the piano accompaniment is becoming more and more diverse.
- The piano accompaniment moves from a purely subordinate position to the melody to a more multidimensional relationship with it.
- The artistic concept is enriched with the use of Chinese folk tunes.
- Exquisite, varied and original piano accompaniment is becoming the norm.
- Synchronous creation of vocal melody and piano accompaniment is achieved.

In conclusion, the author points out that "*the Chinese art songs were produced in the historical process of Chinese and Western musical and cultural exchange. Therefore, the study of piano accompaniment as an integral part of the art song should also receive the attention it deserves.*" (p. 75)

The **second chapter** focuses on the art songs based on texts from the classical Chinese poetry. It discusses the periods of origin, development and the current period of rapid and multidirectional development. The corresponding works typical of each stage are presented and through an analysis of the vocal melody and the piano accompaniment, the evolution of these songs, the characteristic features in the development of the piano accompaniment and the vocal melody are summarized. There is an attempt to show the increasingly improving combination of singer and instrumentalist "*to achieve a perfect synthesis between voice and piano, to reveal the special charm of the Chinese classical poetry, and ultimately to realize a true fusion between poetry and music.*" (p. 80)

The **third chapter**, dedicated to the emergence and development of the Chinese national opera, presents the historical prerequisites for the emergence of the opera as a genre in the country, the political, economic and cultural factors that influence the prosperity of the opera art. The author examines the piano accompaniment in the Chinese National Opera, concluding that "*over time, the piano accompaniment has taken on more and more diverse functions, not only supporting the harmony and the rhythm, but also playing a role in portraying the stage action and creating the stage atmosphere*". (p. 7)

Chapter four summarizes the qualities of the accompaniment in the Chinese art songs from the perspective of music theory, aesthetics, and cultural theory. Here the author interprets "*the place and the role of the piano accompaniment in the Chinese traditional music culture, as well as the cultural clash in combining piano accompaniment with other musical elements.*"

I will not quote the contributions of the dissertation work, identified in the **fifth chapter**, but I fully support them. The abstract follows the course of the dissertation work and fully conveys its character. The sources used are correctly cited, and the three scientific publications mentioned are related to the topic of the work and are completely sufficient.

I hereby congratulate the doctoral candidate and his supervisor Prof Lyudmil Petkov for the achieved results and the high level of the dissertation work, **and I propose to the respected scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art to the doctoral student Huang Boyu.**

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Prof Toni Shekerjieva-Novak, PhD