

## REVIEW

by Prof Stefan Ivanov Harkov, D. Arts.

on dissertation work

for awarding educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR"

in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art,

scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art

Department of Classical, Pop and Jazz Performing Arts

AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev"

Author of the dissertation: **YIHAN GAO**

Title: *Historical Aspects in the Development of the Chinese Violin Art in the Period 1919 - 2008*

with academic supervisor: Prof Stela Blagoeva Miteva-Dinkova, PhD

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

On 23 February 2024, I received for review from Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" the following materials: Dissertation work of Mr. Yihan Gao, abstract of the dissertation work, three scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation work. Together with them, I received Yihan Gao's CV and an order for his enrolment as a doctoral student at AMDFA.

According to the materials received, after completing with an excellent grade the mandatory course in Bulgarian language and specialized disciplines in 2020, Mr. Gao was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student by order He RD - 27-024 of 29 April 2021. The title of the dissertation is written in the text of the enrolment order: *Historical Aspects in the Development of the Chinese Violin Art after 1919 to the Present*. In the process of working on the dissertation, the title was specified and took the following form: *Historical Aspects in the Development of the Chinese Violin Art in the Period 1919-2008*.

The dissertation work was discussed and proposed for public defense at a meeting of the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, held on 13 February 2024.

### **2. Brief biographical information about the candidate**

Yihan Gao is a graduate of Harbin Normal University Conservatory of Music. The city of Harbin is located in the north-eastern part of China, bordering Russia. Since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Russian culture has had a strong influence in the city. Harbin University is one of the prestigious universities in China. Yihan Gao started his university education in 2011 and graduated in 2019 with a Master's degree in violin. In his student years, he had an active concert activity as a solo performer, as well as in chamber ensembles and orchestras. Winner of awards from competitions. After completing his higher education, he began working as a violin teacher at Yibin University, Sichuan Province in southern China. In February 2020, he joined the mandatory preliminary course for training in the

doctoral program of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv. After his enrolment as a doctoral student, he participated in a number of concerts and competitions – he was awarded the Second Prize of the International Chamber Music Competition in Prague, Czech Republic (2021) and the "Golden Lyre" prize of the International Competition of Music, Dance and Visual Arts "Orpheus Talents" in Plovdiv (2022).

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

The historical path of the Chinese violin art is still little known in Europe. At the same time, the achievements of the Chinese violinists are an indisputable fact, especially in the last few decades. This gives rise to the need to look for the reasons for such high achievements in a relatively short historical period of time. In this sense, the dissertation submitted for defense is completely relevant not only for Bulgaria, but also for Europe.

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

Given the historical focus of the dissertation work indicated in the title, the use of the historical research method is completely appropriate. In this case, this method is suitably combined with the comparative research method.

### **5. Evaluation of the dissertation work – knowledge of the problem, content and structure according to the established norms, credibility, analytical approach, derived results**

The scientific work presented for defense shows an excellent knowledge of the problem on the part of the candidate. At the very beginning of his work, he poses a fundamental question: "*How the violin - a foreign instrument with wonderful sound capacity and a long history, finds a resonance in the Chinese society, integrates into the educational system and dialogues with traditional Chinese instruments*" (p. 3-4). In seeking an answer to this question, Mr. Gao presents a large amount of facts culled from books, archives and periodicals. The facts are carefully arranged according to the historical research method. In this way, the content and the structure of the work are shaped within the established norms (introduction, four chapters, conclusion, contributions, bibliography, list of scientific publications of the doctoral student on the topic of the dissertation, appendices; total volume of the dissertation work – 172 pages). This has created the basis on which the submitted materials are subjected to analysis. As a result of the analysis, valuable results were obtained. Among these results, particularly significant for our modern musical culture is the finding that the rise and success of the Chinese violin art in its main aspects – musical performance (concert life, sound recording), compositional creativity, pedagogical mastery, luthier production, music publishing activity – are directly the result of a purposeful state policy regarding the culture in China.

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

Among the contributions of the dissertation work and the publications on it, the scale in which the evolution of the Chinese violin art has been researched makes a particular impression. Four groups of factors are considered – historical, political, geographical and socio-cultural. This allows to clearly differentiate and evaluate the various external influences and the way in which these influences were perceived by the Chinese society. The text shows the contemporary open and in-depth thinking of the author, who critically evaluates historical periods and individual phenomena. Indicative in this regard is the assessment of the period of the so-called "Cultural Revolution" in China (p. 80).

## **7. Critical remarks and recommendations**

There is some ambiguity in some of the terms used in the thesis. For example, Chapter One speaks of the "*Middle Eastern Railway Symphony Orchestra*" (pp. 13-14). The term "Middle East" has a specific meaning and geographical scope. This geographical scope does not include China – it is part of the Far East. In this case, we are talking about a railway line built by Russia on Chinese territory at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Russian this railway line is called "*Китайско-Восточная железная дорога (КВЖД)*" and in English – the Chinese Eastern Railway. The translation in Bulgarian is "China-Eastern Railway". In the context of the problem studied in the dissertation, in Bulgarian it is correct to use the term "*Symphonic Orchestra of the Builders of the China-Eastern Railway*"

## **8. Abstract**

The dissertation abstract consists of 60 pages and correctly reflects the content of the dissertation work.

## **9. Conclusion**

Having considered the materials provided for the defense of the dissertation work, I confidently recommend to the respected members of the scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (field of higher education: 8. Arts; professional field: 8.3. Music and Dance Art to YHAN GAO.

19 March 20204

Reviewer: /signature/