

## OPINION

by **Assoc. Prof Eduard Magardich Sarafyan, PhD**

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

in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

in the doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

to

**Zhou Xiangfei**

PhD student at the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts

Faculty of Music Pedagogy of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev"

Titled: **COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CHINESE  
AND THE WESTERN OPERA ART**

Academic supervisor Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak

The dissertation work of Zhou Xiangfei, titled *Comparative study of the Chinese and the Western Opera Art* period meets the regulatory requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". The candidate has presented a work that, in its size and content, meets all expectations for a complete and valuable scientific literature in the field vocal-instrumental art. The abstract is 68 pages, in which the author has synthesized essential highlights of the research, which in turn are able to fully reveal the content of the dissertation work. The presented **scientific publications** on the subject outline in different stages of the research, respectively, the periods in the development of the Chinese and the Western European opera art. The **artistic biography** of the doctoral candidate reveals the achievements and educational parameters and the expressed interest in the work as a teacher. The **contributions** of the work listed by the author correspond with the goals and tasks of the research.

### **Brief biographical data for the candidate:**

Zhou Xiangfei is a tenor and vocal teacher at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music, China. His artistic and pedagogical experience are directly related to the opera and the classical vocal art. It is interesting to note that during his studies from 2002 to 2006 at the Sichuan Conservatory in China, Xiangfei was named one of the top students of his class. In the period 2006 - 2009, he was a vocal teacher at the Sichuan Multinational Institute, where he taught Classical Singing. During his studies and in parallel with his teaching work, he repeatedly participated in opera performances and artistic initiatives.

### **Participation in competitions and awards**

- Gold medal in the professional group of a vocal music competition in Italy;
- Silver medal in the vocal music competition in Chengdu, China;

### **Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work**

The dissertation work presented by doctoral student Zhou Xiangfei on the topic *Comparative Study of the Chinese and the Western Opera Art* consists of 164 pages and is structured in an introduction, 7 chapters, conclusion, contributions and bibliography. The work analyzes in detail the main characteristics of the operatic musical culture of the East and the West.

In the **Introduction**, the author argues the reasons for choosing the topic and makes a brief presentation of the content of the dissertation work, as well as a general overview of the Eastern and the Western opera art.

The **first chapter** is composed of two main sections, which examine the economic prerequisites for the emergence and development of the Chinese and the Western opera. In the first section, the doctoral student focuses on the ancient Italian economic traditions inherited from Ancient Greece in the Roman Empire, which had a significant impact on the development of the economy in Italy in the Renaissance era, by promoting the prosperity of international trade, the development of crafts was stimulated, the political system became modern and democratic, and it is these circumstances that provided for a favorable economic environment for the emergence of the Italian opera art. The second section examines the state of the Chinese economy during the period of the emergence of opera in China and the prerequisites providing a favorable economic environment for the emergence of the Chinese opera art at the beginning of the 20th century.

**Chapter Two** examines the influence of the political establishment on the development of the Chinese and the Western opera. The first section concludes that, based on the Italian social class division, wealth was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the upper class and the elite of the Italian society, who pursued refined and elegant cultural taste. This led the upper class to spend more and more money on purchasing and investing in art, which had an extremely strong influence on the development of the opera in Italy during the Renaissance. The second section emphasizes the influence of the modern intellectual community, which developed at the end of the Chinese Empire and the beginning of the Republic and played a key role in the entry of the Western culture, proclaimed new social ideas, welcomed freedom and democracy, and encouraged new cultural views in China, which gave rise to the rapid development of the Chinese opera.

**Chapter Three** explores the cultural origins and development of the Chinese and the Western opera. In the first section, the fact of the rapid development of compositional techniques and the enormous talent of the composers in Italy is of interest. In the second section, the author emphasizes the enormous influence of the New Culture Movement in China on the development of cultural traditions in China and in particular Chinese opera.

In **Chapter Four**, the completely different cultural genes of the Western and the Eastern culture are examined and compared. The author examines and differentiates the different stereotypes of thinking.

**Chapter five** examines the artistic aesthetics and artistic expressiveness in the Chinese and the Western opera. The author highlights the aesthetics of the Chinese art, which regards “good” as beauty, while the Western art defines “true” as beauty. The expressiveness in the Chinese art is contrasted with the realistic representation of the Western art.

**Chapter six** compares the characteristics of the Western and the Chinese literature. The author compares the differences in poetry and epic, differentiates the literary characteristics of the Chinese and the Western opera in terms of lyrics and narrative. The collective identity and collectively oriented consciousness and concepts in the traditional Chinese culture are mentioned as a specific feature. The difference between the images of the "hero" and "positive characters" in the Chinese and the Western opera is one of the aspects of the different understanding of individuality and collectivity in the Chinese and the Western culture.

**Chapter seven** examines the integration process in the development of the Chinese and the Western opera culture based on exchange. The first section presents the entry and rooting of the Western opera in China in the 19th century. The second section examines the entry of the Chinese elements into the Western opera.

#### **Contributions and significance of the dissertation and the publications on its topic**

The mentioned contributions of the dissertation are correct and eloquently outline the research work done by the doctoral student. The scholarly publications are sufficient in number and they present key moments in the emergence and development of the Chinese and the Western opera art.

This dissertation has high scientific value and practical applicability, combining multidisciplinary theories and methods such as cultural studies, musicology and aesthetics, conducting a systematic and in-depth study of the Chinese and the Western opera music culture, and achieving a series of innovative research results, intertwined with the personal attitude and attention of the author, which in turn arose from his deep interest and special attachment to classical singing and opera art.

I give my positive assessment of Zhou Xiangfei’s dissertation work *Comparative study of the Chinese and the Western Opera Art* under the skillful scientific guidance of Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak. I believe that the dissertation fully meets the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria Act. I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Zhou Xiangfei an educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

15.12.2024 r.  
Plovdiv

Reviewer:  
/Assoc. Prof Dr. Eduard Sarafyan /