

## OPINION

by

Prof Ermila Schweitzer, PhD

NMA „Prof Pancho Vladigerov”

on the dissertation of

**Tianzi Tian**

– full-time doctoral student

in Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

Doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

at the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts

at AMDFA, “Prof Asen Diamandiev” - Plovdiv,

Academic supervisor: Assoc. Prof Plamen Parvanov, PhD

on topic:

*A History of Modern Opera in China from the Birth of the Genre to the Present - a detailed analysis  
of the most significant operas of the period,*

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

On the grounds of a decision of the Faculty Council at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy dated 17.04.2024, to open a procedure for the defense of the dissertation work of Tianzi Tian, I was provided with the following materials: CV of the candidate, dissertation work, abstract, a reference to the contribution nature of the dissertation, list of publications on the topic.

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

Ms. Tianzi Tian graduated with a bachelor's degree from the Department of Music at Xiamen University. From 2016 to 2018, she was accepted with a scholarship and studied at the Manhattan School of Music in the USA, majoring in vocal music under the famous soprano Joan Patenaude. During her studies in New York, she participated in performances of *The Magic Flute*, performing the role of the Queen of the Night. 2019 also participated in the Berlin Opera Academy, with the role of Zerlina from *Don Giovanni*. In the period 2019-2022, she is a guest teacher of vocal music at Minnan University, Fujian Pedagogical University, and also in the high school class of the Xiamen Conservatory of Music. She has good piano accompaniment skills and teaches vocal skills, Italian, German, English, Russian and French spelling rules, recitative singing rules, song processing and more. She has won a number of awards from vocal competitions, and also composes.

Tianzei Tian's dissertation aims to make a complete and thorough classification of the Chinese operas in terms of musical material, themes and composition techniques in the process of their historical evolution. The research is motivated, according to the author: "by the desire for Chinese opera art to continue to flourish and for Chinese opera to take its rightful place on the world opera stage" (p.8).

The research methods include: a review of the scientific literature on the topic (the bibliography contains 58 printed titles and 33 Internet sources), statistical analysis, case study, comparative research, inductive method, personal visits to cultural circles and meetings with artists.

Tianzi Tian's dissertation is a historical-analytical study. It includes a historical overview of the century-long history of the Chinese opera, which emerged under the influence of the Western opera and the bel canto vocal style. The dissertation traces the initial difficulties faced by the new genre, related to the huge cultural and value differences between China and the West at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as purely organizational ones - such as finding suitable halls, costumes, sets and adequate funding.

The author traces the evolution of the idea of the Chinese opera, starting with the so-called from her "enlightenment period" (1920-1935) - the birth of children's dance performances, also called children's musicals by Li Jinghui. The lyric operas of Yen Shushu are the next great step forward in terms of ideas and art, closely approaching the Western opera genre, unfortunately, there are no preserved sheet music from these productions. "*The artistic forms of this period cannot be attributed to the genre of the classical Western opera, but represent the so-called "musical theater" (which combines singing and drama) or "new musical drama"*. (p.45)

As the next important stage, the author examines the appearance of the first author's opera in China - *The White Haired Maiden* (1945). A detailed analysis of the structure, arias and vocal styles used in the opera is made. The author concludes that "*the scale of the opera works (of this period), the duration of the performances, the composition of the orchestra and the investments for the stage layout are increasingly approaching the model of the Western operas.*" (p.88)

In chapters four and five, Ms. Tianzi explores the heyday of the Chinese opera after the so-called "cultural revolution" - a time of repression, prohibitions and stagnation. According to her, the operas created after 1980 can be divided into three categories: imitation of the Western opera style, ethnic direction and modernist musical trends (p.127). The author defines the development of opera in the new century as a "flourishing period", "*characterized by eclecticism, breaking the boundaries and overflowing between different styles and forms, which creates conditions for pragmatic, open to new ideas and concepts, opera creativity, in line with the modern trends*" (p. 207).

Nine contributions of the work are listed, which I fully accept. A large amount of information has been collected, systematized in overview tables, which is also a strong contributing point of the work.

The publications on the topic of the dissertation work are sufficient and demonstrate accumulated professional experience and prominent research interest. The submitted abstract corresponds to the dissertation.

Tianzi Tian's dissertation is a thorough historical-analytical study, a huge amount of information has been collected, detailed analyzes have been made, and the conclusions have been well formulated. Based on what has been said so far, I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Tianzi Tian the scientific educational degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art.

Sofia, 01.07.2024

Prof Ermila Schweitzer