

REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof Petar Dimitrov Salchev, AMDFA “Prof A. Diamandiev”
of dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree **Doctor**

field of higher education: Arts,

Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

Doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

Author: Yingying Hou

Topic: *The Synthesis between Bel Canto and Pop Singing in the Vocal Art of the Musical*

Academic supervisor: Prof. V. Koychev, AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev”

Associate Professor, Department of Musical Theatre, Shenyang Conservatory of Music. Member of the Popular Music Association of the Chinese Musicians Association. Member of the Liaoning Province Playwrights Association. Visiting scholar majoring in musical theater at Peking University, Member of Peking University Alumni Association.

Educational background:

In 1999 graduates the Culture and Arts Personnel College of Liaoning Province, majoring in drama, film and television performances, junior college.

2007 Shenyang School of Arts, Conservatory of Music, Bachelor of Popular Vocal Music.

In 2014 graduates the musical theater training class of the Central Academy of Drama. In 2014 receives Master's degree from Shenyang Conservatory of Music, studying in the class of Professor Yang Weizhong, majoring in pop vocal singing.

2014 Peking University International Music Master Class and received certificate.

In 2015, Broadway AMDA Hong Kong Musical Theater jointly organized the graduation of the Chinese and American Musical Masterclass. In 2015, she is appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Musical Theater of Shenyang Conservatory of Music, and becomes an Associate Professor in the Department of Musical Theater in 2021.

2018 -2019 completed an advanced course in musical theater at Peking University. From 2009 until now, she has been working in the Department of Musical Theater, College of Drama, Film and Television, Shenyang Conservatory of Music.

Awards:

In 2023 won the first prize in the category Young Vocal Music Teacher of the British International Music Open China Division for Outstanding Instructor;

First prize in the teacher category at the 9th Chuncheon Korea International Popular Singing Competition;

First prize at the 11th International Popular Music Solo Music Vocal Performance and Popular Singing Competition "Korea Chuncheon";

Outstanding Instructor Award in the 11th Korea Chuncheon International Music Theater Vocal Performance and Popular Singing Competition; Won the final of the 5th China-Korea International Music Competition. Outstanding Instructor Award;

Her student Wang Hanzhen won second prize in the pop singing group of the VII Youth Vocal Music Group in the finals of the 5th China-Korea International Music Competition, who also won first prize in the popular singing group of the VII Youth Vocal Music Group in the selection of the Chinese Division of the 5th China-Korea International Music Competition;

Her students Ma Zhenqing, Wang Hanga, Lin Weihang and Wang Jiahao won first prize with their student group at the 9th Chuncheon International Popular Vocal Song Competition in South Korea;

Her student Guo Minjin won third prize in music group 'B' at the 11th Chuncheon Korea International Music Vocal Performance and Popular Singing Competition.

In 2018 she is assistant director for Liaoning Satellite TV in the category "Group for the Spring Festival Gala" She is the assistant director of the French promotion column "Cane flowers like snow". 2017 Assistant director of the Liaoning Satellite TV "Jokes Stifled with Weight" show.

She is the author of the works *Crazy Training Class*, *Celebrity Arrival*, *Crazy Ballet* and *Men's Self-Defense*. She directed the musical *The Oath of the Golden Helmet* for the Spring Festival Gala of the Air Force Command's Northern Theater. In November 2017, CCTV I Love Mantangcai directed *Debt Collection Jokes*. 2019 graduation report presentation of the Advanced Study Class in Musical Theater of the National Library of China Arts Center.

In 2017, she was awarded the April Star of Liaoning Radio's *Hey Let's Sing Together* show. 2017 second semester Art Practice Collaborative Performance Instructor Shenyang Conservatory of Music Instructor Distinguished Student Concert "Oklahoma Musical" Won the Shenyang Conservatory of Music Teacher's Excellent Evaluation in 2017. In the evaluation of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music faculty for 2019, she won the outstanding award. 2018 Liaoning Satellite TV Assistant Director in the category for Film and TV.

The dissertation work consists of **introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, contributions and bibliography.**

In the introduction, the doctoral candidate presents her reasons for choosing the topic, such as:

- Possibility of scientific-analytical work in a wide chronological and detailed-analytical range.
- Upgrading and improving my cultural-philosophical and historical-aesthetic understanding of the solo vocal art.
- Enriching my vocal-methodical practice with different models and strategies for working with young performers.

At the very beginning of the dissertation, there is a very clear and specific idea that the doctoral student has regarding the **goal** set in this research.

The research toolkit used in the dissertation is a comparative, analytical-chronological and theoretical analysis, comparing records published in music platforms and databases, analysis of examples from practice and conclusions based on the author's generated personal performance-scientific experience.

In **Chapter one** - *Evolution of the musical and its popularization in China* - the author examines the historical sources of the musical in the form of two of the European stage forms, *opera-buffa* and *operetta*, whose development and gradual shaping make them the "parents" of the musical. Developmental subgenres of the musical such as the Broadway musical and London's West End musical in the 19th and 20th centuries are explored. Special attention is paid to the entry of the musical into China.

Chapter Two explores in depth the similarities and differences between the *bel canto* and pop singing. The two singing styles are mainly analyzed. Information about the origin and development, features and techniques of the *bel canto* singing style has been collected and systematized. It also explains the technical characteristics of the trained *bel canto* voice, basic technical principles in *bel canto*, ease and simplicity of singing, bringing ornamentation into singing by means of *coloratura*, recitative singing - *Sprechgesang*. The author provides general information on the origin and development of pop singing and the incarnations of pop singing in foreign musicals. She makes a characterization of pop singing in the Chinese musical and an exposition of the features and the vocal technique of pop music, listing the means of expressions and styles in pop singing, such as lyrical style, folk singing, country, rock, jazz, rap style, musical style and Chinese pop singing style.

An important part of the study contains a thorough examination of the questions of similarities and differences between *bel canto* and pop singing in two respects: in the use of the voice and in the style of performance. The candidate discusses important aspects to singing, such as breathing, sound production and timbre, voice strength, resonance, throat position, vocal cords, diction and performance style. She also takes into account factors such as environment, language and different national history. Similarities and differences in teaching methodology are developed theoretically, such as peculiarities in teaching *bel canto* and pop singing.

Chapter Three explores performance styles and forms of expression in the musical. A comparative analysis is made between the musical and other music-theatre genres and specifically between the musical and the opera. Similarities and differences between the musical and the Chinese theatrical forms are also pointed out. The author compares the musical and the Chinese theater as performing arts and discusses the question of the genre-stylistic diversity of the Chinese opera. A classification of the vocal styles and forms of expression in the musical is made.

Chapter four is devoted to analyses and comparisons in the use, on the one hand, of *bel canto* techniques and, on the other hand, of pop vocal techniques in the musical's vocal performances.

Various arias from musicals are examined and analyzed in terms of using the elements of bel canto in a specific dramatic context and examples of the use of bel canto in the musical. The use of pop vocal techniques in musical theater is also analyzed. The author also examines the use of the Chinese folk singing, in comparison to the music-theatre singing in China. A special place is devoted to the analysis of the integration between bel canto and pop singing in the musical, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the use of different musical styles to aid musical perception and the introduction of an innovative approach to vocal training. A discussion on vocal training integrating bel canto and popular singing methods is provoked, with the aim of deepening the synthesis between bel canto and pop singing in the musical.

The research has an interdisciplinary character, as it affects different scientific fields: musicology, vocal methodology, theater studies, etc., which could give impetus to interdisciplinary research. By integrating knowledge and methods from various disciplines, a comprehensive and in-depth study of the synthesis between bel canto and pop singing in the vocal performances of the musical is provided. Thus, the applied interdisciplinary research approach not only helps to expand the research horizon, but could also infuse new vitality into the development of the musical as an art.

The work could contribute to the renewal and development of the musical as a contemporary art form. Through the synthesis between bel canto and pop singing, a breakthrough and renewal of the performance style of the musical is achieved, which brings the audience a richer aesthetic experience.

In the course of analysis, the dissertation focuses on scientific and empirical evidence, using a variety of methods and tools for data collection and analysis. The in-depth study of numerous practical examples leads to convincing conclusions and ideas. This rigorous, empirical research approach exemplifies the study of vocal art in musicals and could serve as useful material for other related scholarly fields as well. In the process of considering and writing the dissertation, and in view of five aspects: history, vocal style, juxtaposition, application and synthesis, the author systematically examines the differences between the Chinese and the American vocal music and performance, and the ways and means of achieving this synthesis. Based on the serious amount of research carried out by the author during more than ten years of teaching and creative activity, the exposition in the dissertation work is scientifically supported and empirically confirmed.

The study of the topic has not only academic, but also important socio-cultural value. Through the synthesis of bel canto and pop singing, the musical approaches the aesthetic needs of the modern audiences while inheriting and promoting the traditional culture. The research also aims to build a bridge between the musical in China and the US, to find adequate ways to portray the characters in the musical using the fusion between bel canto and pop singing, to help raise the quality level of the musical, and to increase the socio-cultural weight of this art.

The results of the research would be of great importance in promoting international exchange and cooperation in the field of musicals.

The doctoral student has submitted 3 original scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation. They are published in specialized editions and are related to the topic of the dissertation:

1. Yingying Hou, *A Study of the Use of Ethnic and Popular Elements in the Musical Notre Dame de Paris*, Drama House Magazine, Vol. 25, 2022, pp. 34-36, ISSN 1007-0125.

2. Yingying Hou, *Some Suggestions for the Local Development of Chinese Musicals*, The Academic Periodical of Shenyang Conservatory of Music, 2021, p. 137-143, ISSN 1001-5736.

3. Yingying Howe, *A Study of the Comprehensive Training of Musical Performers*, Symphony Magazine, Vol. 2/2023, pp. 134-139, ISSN 1003-1499.

Summarizing the above, it can be noted that the dissertation is a complete, thorough and contributing study of the synthesis between bel canto and pop singing in the musical. These results have not only academic value and practical significance, but also a certain socio-cultural significance nationally and internationally, and would have a positive impact on the development and renewal of the musical.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that Yingying Hou has presented for defense a serious and valuable work, which unequivocally shows her analytical qualities, the ability to systematize in a historical, cultural and functional aspect. She approached the chosen topic academically and based on the analyses and evaluation she was able to accurately formulate the scientific contributions and merits of the work.

Based on everything that has been said so far, I give my positive assessment of the presented dissertation work and propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Yingying Hou the scientific and educational degree "Doctor".

08.06.2024

PhD

Plovdiv

Assoc. Prof Petar Salchev,