

REVIEW

Prof Deyan Evgeniev Pavlov

teacher of Opera Singing with a Conductor at the Department of Music - Performing Arts at the Vocal Faculty, and Opera Symphonic Conducting at the Department of Composition and Conducting at the Faculty of Theoretical Composition and Conducting at the National Music Academy "Prof Pancho Vladigerov" – Sofia

on the dissertation work for awarding educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

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

Author: Yingying Hou

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

in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art,
Doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

Yingying Hou is an associate professor at the Department of Musical Theatre in 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 theatre at Peking University Member of Peking University Alumni Association.

Education:

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 students:

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.

Her student, Han Yuchen, won second prize in Pop Solo Group A at the 11th Korea Chuncheon International Music Theater Vocal Performance and Popular Singing Competition.

Assistant Director

In 2018 Liaoning Satellite TV in the category "Group for the Spring Festival Gala"

The French promotion column "Cane flowers like snow".

2017 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*.

Director:

of the musical *The Oath of the Golden Helmet* for the Spring Festival Gala of the Air Force Command's Northern Theatre

In November 2017, CCTV I Love Mantangcai of *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. Director of the large-scale author's children's musical *The Flower Fairy*.

- of the large-scale fantastic children's musical *Under the Sea*.

- on the graduation drama "I love you" for the music class of 2013 of Shenyang Conservatory of Music.

- of the repertoire for the graduation drama *Oklahoma* by the musical theater class of 2014 at the Shenyang Conservatory of Music.

- Shenyang Conservatory of Music 2015 music class graduation drama *Star Dream Hairspray* directed by the Music Theater of Changqing Campus of the Conservatory of Music.

- of the graduation drama *Mamma Mia* from the musical theater class of 2015 at Shenyang Institute of Technology Art School.

Winging Hou **publishes scientific research.**

Teaches collaborative performance of art practices for the second semester of 2017. Instructor of 2017 Shenyang Conservatory of Music. Concert with distinguished students of the musical *Oklahoma*

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.

- Released solo album "Brave" in 2016

- Performs the theme song for the 2017 film *National Treasure*.

In 2018, the Shenyang Conservatory of Music "Fly with confidence" supply and demand selection competition participated as a teacher of the musical *Oklahoma* Changqing Campus Music Theater.

Director of Beijing KFC 30th Anniversary in honor of the classic collection and celebration of beautiful memories in December 2018.

Won the title of Outstanding Teacher at the 7th Liaoning Provincial College Student Drama Festival. And many more appearances in all spheres.

The **CONTRIBUTIONS** of the dissertation work are:

1. The history, development and spread of the musical in China are explored.
2. The Bel Canto singing method, the popular music singing method and the similarities and differences between them are described and developed in detail.
3. A comparative analysis is made between the musical and other music-theatre genres. The vocal styles and forms of expression in the musical are classified.
4. For the first time, a theoretical framework was built for the study and practical application of the synthesis between bel canto and pop singing in the musical.
5. Specific ideas are given for the renewal and development of the musical by integrating folk singing in China and pop singing with music-theatre singing.
6. Methods of introducing the use of different musical styles into the performer training system are proposed in order to expand and deepen the integrated singing training.

The **Abstract** consists of an Introduction, Relevance of the Topic, Object, Subject, Objectives, Tasks and Thesis of the Research, Research Methodology and Structure of the dissertation work.

This work systematically examines the history of the musical, its development and distribution in China, and the stylistic diversity and forms of expression of bel canto and pop singing manifested in the vocal parts of the musical.

The research discusses topics such as the artistic specificity of the musical and its stylistic vocal features; how to enrich the processes of learning and teaching vocal art and how to expand our aesthetic horizons. The presented research is suitable for students of vocal music who wish to gain new perspectives on the mastery and improvement of singing skills in the musical genre. The author hopes that the work will be useful for vocal music lovers as well as professionals working in the field of musical art.

Relevance of the topic

At the heart of the present topic is the question of how in the process of music art different types of vocal styles are successfully combined. In modern China, which is building its new cultural self-confidence, there is a new research direction related to finding vocal skills in musicals that correspond to a higher degree to the Chinese specificity and folk spirit.

The stage forms of the musical in China and its overall system of stage performances since its arrival in the country have copied the Western prototypes, and the early stages of its development are related to borrowing from the West, where the musical is at a more advanced stage of its development. The research contribution of this dissertation is that it provides a detailed analysis of the interaction between bel canto and pop singing from the point of view of vocal mastery in the musical, from a practical and theoretical point of view. In recent years, the topic of the integration of bel canto and pop singing in the vocal prowess of the musical has consistently focused considerable interest on the part of researchers. According to the author of the present work, the study of the relationship between the two should be based on an analysis oriented to the approaches in the construction of the artistic characters in musicals, which will explore and search for interdependencies and regularities between these two aspects in relation to the singing styles and the music art. All this could provide important guidelines for the future development of the vocal mastery in the field of the Chinese musicals.

Object, subject, objectives, tasks and thesis of the research

The **object** of the dissertation work is the vocal art of the musical.

The **subject** of the research is the synthesis between bel canto and pop singing in the vocal art of the musical.

-The **objectives** of the study are:

1. Study of the evolution of the musical in historical terms.
2. Study of the various features, means of expression and technical techniques of bel canto, as well as those of pop singing. To examine styles in pop singing.
3. To establish the similarities and differences between bel canto and pop singing in the use of voice, performance style and teaching methodology.

The **tasks** set by the research are:

1. To trace the historical aspects of the appearance and development of the musical in Europe and America and its entry into China.
2. To classify the vocal styles and forms of expression in pop music and musicals.

3. To find common features and connections between the vocal performance styles and techniques of pop music and musicals.

The **thesis** of the study is that there are common and unifying elements, technical skills and techniques between bel canto and pop singing that are successfully used or could be used in the vocal art of the musical.

Research methodology – The author has selected literature and visual materials related to the issues of bel canto and pop singing considered in the dissertation, with which she argues her thesis. She cites and compares with fragments of classic works in the genre of the musical, and at the same time conducts an interdisciplinary study of the characteristics of these works using the following approach:

Content and structure of the dissertation:

Chapter one, *Evolution of the musical and its popularization in China* 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 the similarities and differences between 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 research contains a thorough examination of the questions of similarities and differences between the bel canto and pop singing in two respects: in the use of the voice and in the style of performance. Aspects important to singing are covered, such as breathing, intonation and timbre, voice strength, resonance, throat position, vocal cords, diction and performance style. Factors such as environment and language, different national history are also taken into account. Similarities and differences in teaching methodology are developed theoretically, such as peculiarities in teaching bel canto and pop singing.

Chapter three examines the 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 musical and the Chinese theater as performing arts are

compared, the question of the genre-stylistic diversity of the Chinese opera is examined. A classification of vocal styles and forms of expression in the musical is made.

Chapter four is dedicated to analyses and comparisons in the application of the bel canto techniques on the one hand, and the pop vocal techniques on the other hand, in the vocal performances of the musical. 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. Also examined is the use of the Chinese folk singing, juxtaposed with 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 the musical perception and the introduction of an innovative approach to vocal training. A discussion on the vocal training integrating bel canto and popular singing methods is provoked in order to deepen the synthesis between bel canto and pop singing in the musical.

In the Conclusion, the doctoral student summarizes the work on her dissertation through conclusions:

The present work could contribute to the renewal and development of the musical as a contemporary art. Through the synthesis between bel canto and pop singing, a breakthrough and renewal of the performing 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 Chinese and 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.

The bibliography consists of 30 specified sources, from which facts and scientific studies are borrowed and used.

Scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation work

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.

Having read Yingying Hou's dissertation work in detail, I can confidently conclude that her work is unique in its research topic and will be of benefit to all those who deal or will deal in the future with a similar idea. I confidently state that I propose to the scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Yingying Hou.

25.06.2024

Prof Deyan Pavlov, PhD