

## OPINION

by Prof Rositsa Dimitrova Becheva,

New Bulgarian University,

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

in Professional direction 8.3. Music and Dance Art

Doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

of **Yingying Hou**,

doctoral student at the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts,

the Faculty of Music Pedagogy of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev"

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

with academic supervisor: Prof Veselin Koychev

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

The provided documents and materials under the procedure for review and defense of educational and scientific degree Doctor by Yingying Hou, are complete and correct and meet the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations for its implementation and the regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions in AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv.

The doctoral student has presented the following materials: CV, dissertation, abstract, list of publications on the topic of the dissertation, reference for contributions, Master's degree certificate, enrollment order, discharging order, scientific jury order.

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

*Educational background:* In 1999 graduates the Culture and Arts Personnel College of Liaoning Province, majoring in drama, film and television performances, junior college; in 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; 2015, Broadway AMDA Hong Kong Musical Theater jointly organized the graduation of the Chinese and American Musical Masterclass; 2019 completed an advanced course in musical theater at Peking University.

From 2021-2024, Winging Hou is a doctoral student at the AMDFA "Prof. Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv, in the program Music Studies and Music Art, and from April 2024 she is discharged with the right of defense.

*Teaching Work:* From 2009 until now, she has been working in the Department of Musical Theater, College of Drama, Film and Television, Shenyang Conservatory of Music - associate professor at the Department of Musical Theatre in Shenyang Conservatory of Music.

Visiting scholar majoring in musical theater at Peking University.

*Her professional work* include directing the graduation drama *I Love You* for the Music Class of 2013 - Shenyang Conservatory of Music; Repertory Director for Shenyang Conservatory of Music Class of 2014 Musical Theater Graduation Drama *Oklahoma*; director of the graduation drama *Mamma Mia* from the musical theater class of 2015 at Shenyang Institute of Technology Art School. Hou Yingying published research and awards; released solo album "Brave" in 2016; 2017 - Assistant director of Liaoning Satellite TV's "Jokes Stifled with Weight" section. She the author of *Crazy Training Class*, *Celebrity Arrival*, *Crazy Ballet* and *Men's Self-Defense*; directed the musical *Oath of the Golden Helmet* for the Air Force Command's Northern Theater Command Spring Festival Gala; in November 2017 CCTV I Love Mantangcai directed *Debt Collection Jokes*; in 2018 Liaoning Satellite TV in the category Group for the Spring Festival Gala is an assistant director; is assistant director of the French publicity column *Flowers of the Cane as Snow*; 2018 - Assistant Director of Liaoning Satellite TV in the section Film and TV Speculations; in 2018, in the supply and demand selection competition of Shenyang Conservatory of Music "Fly with Confidence" participated as an instructor of the musical *Oklahoma* Changqing Campus Music Theater; director of the large-scale author's children's musical *The Flower Fairy*; director of the large-scale fantasy children's musical *Under the Sea*, general director of the 30th anniversary of Beijing KFC in honor of the classic collection and celebration of beautiful memories in December 2018, etc.

Yingyig Hou is the author of scientific publications and monographs.

*Organizational Memberships:* Member of the Popular Music Association of the Chinese Musicians Association; member of the Liaoning Province Playwrights Association; member of Peking University Alumni Association; member of the research team of the Institute of Educational Sciences, Chinese Academy of Management Sciences.

*Awards:* Yingyig Hou won the 2023 British International Music Open China Division Young Vocal Music Teacher Group First Prize 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"; the 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 have also won awards: Wang Hanzhen won the 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 and the 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, etc.

In the 2019 Shenyang Conservatory of Music faculty evaluation, Yingyig Hou won the outstanding award. Won the title of Outstanding Teacher at the 7th Liaoning Provincial College Student Drama Festival. In 2019, she was approved to host the Liaoning Provincial Higher Education Institutions Research Funding Project "The Application and Innovation of Ethnic Music Elements in the Localization of Chinese and Foreign Musicals".

### **Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions**

The dissertation consists of 182 pages, and its structure includes: Introduction, Four chapters, Conclusion, Contributions, Bibliography - a total of 30 sources (30 foreign language titles), Appendices, scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation.

The presented research is relevant with its topic, the topic of the dissertation work is directly related to the executive and teaching practice of the doctoral student.

The introduction introduces the thematic area of the research, the object, subject, purpose, tasks and thesis of the research are formulated.

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: study of the evolution of the musical in historical terms; study of the various features, means of expression and techniques of bel canto, as well as those of pop singing; to examine styles in pop singing; 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: to trace the historical aspects of the appearance and development of the musical in Europe and America and its entry into China; to classify the vocal styles and forms of expression in pop music and musicals; 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.

The **research methodology** includes a review of the scientific literature on the topic, a study of materials, among which: Master's theses with a certain influence in the academic circles, articles in periodical academic editions and others, concerning issues such as "vocal mastery in musicals", "bel canto", "pop singing", etc.; references to publications in influential foreign publications with high representativeness, examination of authoritative pedagogical and theoretical works, visual materials, and all collected materials are subjected to systematic research, summaries and conclusions. The author of the dissertation emphasizes: *"An important emphasis is placed on the consideration of classical musicals and*

*more specifically the vocal techniques in them, which methods are analyzed and summarized ..."*

The research touches on 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 the aesthetic horizon.

**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 *Bel canto and Pop Singing***, analyzes the similarities and differences between the bel canto and pop singing styles and systematizes information about the origin, development, features, techniques of the bel canto singing style, recitative singing "*Sprechgesang*". General information on the origin and development of pop singing, the transformations of the style in foreign and Chinese musicals, means of expression and styles in pop singing are given.

Of particular importance are the texts dealing with aspects such as environment and language, different national history, timbre and sound extraction, diction and style of performance, as well as the developed methods of work.

**Chapter Three *Performing styles and forms of expression in the musical***, offers a comparative analysis between the musical and other music-theatrical genres - specifically between the musical and the opera, the similarities and differences between the musical and the Chinese theatrical forms are indicated, the issue of genre stylistics variety of Chinese opera is considered, a classification of vocal styles and expressive forms in the musical is presented.

**Chapter Four, *Analyses and Comparisons***, examines the musical and bel canto singing – using bel canto techniques in vocal performances of the musical, analyzes various arias from musicals in terms of the elements of bel canto used in a specific dramatic context, and examples of the use of bel canto in the musical, the use of vocal pop technique in the musical, folk singing and vocal performance in the Chinese musical, the synthesis between bel canto and pop singing in the musical are examined. The analysis also focuses on the vocal training, the introduction of innovative approaches in training.

The **Conclusion** summarizes the outcomes and the recommendations of the study. Appendices supplement the main text.

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

I accept the contributions of the work presented by the doctoral candidate, among which:

“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. Also, it examines the question of how to build certain artistic characters in the creative process in the field of contemporary musicals, based on the diversity of singing styles, and also proposes a thought model based on the needs of

the development of contemporary Chinese musicals and not only concerning the technical aspect of musical expression through the combination of disparate approaches, but also introducing a new conceptual framework concerning vocal expression in the musical, stepping on the basis of the accumulated practice”.

The presented three publications on the topic of the dissertation meet the requirements in terms of content.

The abstract consists of 58 pages and conveys the nature of the doctoral work.

The considered dissertation work has a contribution value and applied significance.

In conclusion:

**I give my positive assessment** to Yingying Hou's dissertation work *The Synthesis between Bel Canto and Pop Singing in the Vocal Art of the Musical*, in relation to its contributions of scientific and applied qualities. I believe that the dissertation work of the doctoral student fully meets the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 8.3."Music and Dance Art under the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria Act and I propose to the respected scientific jury that it be awarded to her.

24.06.2024, Sofia

Assoc. Prof Rositsa Becheva