

OPINION

from

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

in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art,

doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

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Title: *A study of the dynamics of the vocal techniques in the Chinese academic folk singing*

with academic supervisor: Prof Toni Shekerjjeva – Novak

Wang Shuaitong was born in 1989 in Henan, China. Between 2007 and 2011 receives Bachelor's degree, and from 2012 to 2015 a Master's degree in singing from Fujian University. From 2019 to 2023 - Doctoral degree at Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv. He participates actively in competitions - Second prize in the vocal category of the Moscow Music Competition, August 2020, Russia, Second prize at Arts Festivals, "Borovets 2020", IV International Competition for Chamber Music and Individual Artists, Bulgaria, October 2020, Second prize at the 23rd International Music Competition "Pietro Argento", Italy, November 2020; First prize at "Danubia talents International Music Competition 2020", Hungary, December 2020; First prize at "King's Peak International Music Competition", USA December 2020; Third prize at "International Instrumental and Vocal Performance Contest Oradea 2021", Romania, April 2021; First prize at "Orpheus 2021", Bulgaria, July 2021. He also participates as an artist - soloist in the operas *Ba-ta-clan*, 2021; *Rita*, 2022 and *Love Elixir*, 2023.

The dissertation consists of a total of 172 pages, which include Introduction, Four Chapters, Conclusion, Contributions of the Dissertation, List of Publications on the topic and Bibliography.

Relevance of the topic – The development of the Chinese musical and singing art has a centuries-old history and deep cultural roots. Around 500 BC, Confucius compiled the first collection of songs in verse form in China - this is the *Book of Songs*, which contains a total of 311 works, including 160 folk songs from the 11th - 6th centuries BC. Around 1000 AD, along with the flourishing of the folk music during the Northern Song Dynasty, and the appearance of designated places for stage performances, as well as professional singers, large-scale genres such as "Zhan Zhuan" and "Jugong" were formed in vocal music art. In the musical culture appear new syncretic forms, such as opera and recitative-song performances, with which the development of the vocal music in China enters a new historical period. At the beginning of the 18th century, parallel to the

prosperity of the economy of the Qing dynasty, local operas also flourished. Currently, a third of the more than 300 types of opera in China were formed during this dynasty, especially the opera genres of Bandzu and the Peking Opera, which gained wide popularity during this period. The iconic Peking Opera starts the division of the characters according to their gender, age, timbre, singing style and other factors, similar to the *bel canto* style in the Western tradition. In 1927, the first Chinese musical higher education institution was established – the National Conservatory of Music in Shanghai, in which foreign professors and teachers with experience from Europe and the USA began to systematically teach *bel canto*.

Review of the studies on the topic From the beginning of modern music education in China to the present day, research on the vocal folk music has always been actively developed, especially after the founding of the People's Republic of China, when the research areas acquired a wide range and included sub-disciplines, such as history of vocal music art, singing techniques, psychology of singing, vocal music pedagogy, vocal music aesthetics, folk songs, etc. The following four aspects related to vocal techniques in the academic folk singing are covered by the dissertation:

- Studies of the teaching of Chinese folk singing.
- Studies of the methods of singing and stage performance.
- Studies of the theory of the vocal folk music art.
- Historical studies.

Objectives, content and methods of the study.

The main objectives of this work are:

- summarizing the history of the development of the Chinese academic vocal music with focus the of research being the academic teaching of folk singing;
- analyzing the reforms and changes in the periods of origination, shaping, stagnation, development and transformation of the academic folk singing;
- tracing the regularities in the development from the 20th century onwards and a comparative study of the foreign methods of teaching academic folk singing;
- tracing the factors in the development from the 20th century onwards, and a comparative study of the foreign methods of teaching folk singing in order to stimulate continuous innovation, progress, improvement and development of the Chinese vocal folk music.

Content of the study. The dissertation focuses on an analysis of the singing methods and pedagogical practice, combined with a study of literary sources. Using statistical methods, the author studies the teaching methods and singing practice of prominent Chinese vocal teachers and singers. He also makes a systematic review of the most important periods in the development of the vocal folk music from the 20th century onwards, with the aim of a deeper and comprehensive understanding of the research object.

Research methods - Study of literary sources.

Historical documents related to the ancient Chinese vocal music and existing documents were researched. A summary of the ancient vocal techniques and analysis of the development and changes in the Chinese academic vocal music teaching since the period of its formation have been carried out.

Research through interviews. Interviews and surveys were conducted with Chinese folk singers and vocal educators regarding the preparation and organization of the learning process, teaching the concepts, methods, content and main results of folk vocal music education, as well as their opinions and suggestions for the development of the academic folk vocal music.

Comparative research method.

Comparative studies of audio materials of vocal folk music from different historical periods have been conducted.

An analysis is made of the development and changes from traditional folk singing through the academic singing to the adoption and integration of the Western singing. In addition, a comparative study on the inheritance and development of folk vocal music in other countries is conducted, and the similarities and differences in development concepts and teaching methods in China and abroad are summarized.

Difficulties and methods of solving them

China has a long history, numerous ethnic groups, and includes a wide range of vocal music genres, and the singing styles inherent in individual regions and ethnic groups vary greatly, requiring a systematic approach in describing and applying them.

Expected results

Conducting an overview and study of the ancient Chinese vocal folk music.

A study of the status and historical reasons for the development of the Chinese academic folk singing in different periods.

A study of the teaching of Chinese academic folk singing in the different periods.

A study of the styles of representative singers in the different periods of the development of the Chinese academic folk singing.

A Comparative study of the Chinese and the Western academic vocal folk music.

Contributions and significance of the dissertation and publications on its topic

Theoretical value - Currently, relatively few systematic studies have been conducted on the Chinese academic school of folk singing. The choice of the dissertation topic is supported by the historical achievements of the ancient Chinese folk vocal art. In addition to reviewing the history of ancient vocal music, the main research scope is concentrated on the development and changes of the Chinese academic vocal music in the period from the New Culture movement to the present day. The stages in the development and the changes of the Chinese academic folk singing under the influence of *bel canto* in the almost one-century period since the introduction of the Western culture to China, passing through assimilation, formation, development, prosperity and other historical stages, are systematically presented. The work offers a study and summary of the contemporary development,

historical reasons, teaching characteristics and singing styles in the academic school of folk singing during each of these periods. The analysis also indicates the external and internal reasons that influenced the development and transformation of the Chinese academic folk singing.

Practical value. The author describes and analyzes the characteristics of teaching, the representative artists and singing styles from each period of development of the Chinese academic school of vocal folk music. The study is a summary of the teaching philosophies, methods and achievements of the best teachers and could provide starting points for improving the current situation giving rise to the phenomenon called "thousand singers with one voice". At the same time the author offers a comparative study of the development of the Bulgarian vocal folk music, from the perspective of an external observer, in terms of teaching methods and curriculum content.

Having read the abstract in detail, I believe that it introduces us to the professional and analytical approach of the dissertation work in detail and reflects the research in the best sense. I recommend to the esteemed jury to award the educational and scientific degree of "doctor" to Wang Shuaitong.

29.03.2023

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