

OPINION

by Prof Stela Miteva-Dinkova, PhD
lecturer at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv,
in professional direction 8.3 Music and Dance Art,
scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art

on dissertation work titled:

A STUDY OF THE DYNAMICS OF THE VOCAL TECHNIQUES IN THE CHINESE ACADEMIC FOLK SINGING

Author: **Wang Shuaitong**,

doctoral student at Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv,
Faculty of Music Pedagogy, Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts,
presented for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree **Doctor**
in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art
with academic supervisor Prof Shekerdzhieva-Novak

By decision of a meeting of the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts of the Faculty of Musical Pedagogy of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv, held on 14 Feb 2023, and based on order No RD 27-031 of the Rector of AMDFA dated 24 Mar 2023, I have been appointed as a member of a scientific jury in a procedure for defense of dissertation work on the topic *A study of the dynamics of the vocal techniques in the Chinese academic folk singing* for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in a professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art. The author of the dissertation is Wang Shuaitong, a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv.

The candidate has presented the following required materials: curriculum vitae, dissertation, abstract, list of publications on the topic, and list of dissertation contributions.

Wang Shuaitong is born in Henan Province in eastern China. In the period 2007-2015, he receives Bachelor's degree in Opera Singing (tenor) and Master's degree from Fujian University. Until his arrival in Plovdiv in 2019, he is actively engaged in teaching and research activities.

His research interests are in the field of vocal traditional Chinese music. He has published a total of 9 scientific publications in China, Bulgaria and America.

His work as an artist, which he carries out in parallel with his studies as a doctoral student at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv, is not less impressive. He actively participate as a soloist in the productions of the Academic Opera Theatre: *Ba-ta-clan* (2021), *Rita* (2022) and *Love Elixir* (2023). He perfected his skills in the field of chamber music as part of a vocal ensemble "Pro

Belcanto". He is winner of First prizes from the international music competitions "Danubia Talents", Hungary (2020), "King's Peak", USA (2020) and "Orpheus 2021", Bulgaria; Second prizes from the Moscow Music Competition in Russia (2020), the 4th International Competition for Chamber Music and Individual Artists, Borovets and the 23rd International Music Competition "Pietro Argento", Italy (2020), etc.

The above presents Wang Shuaitong as a successful performer, educator and thorough researcher with outstanding qualities and broad interests in the field of classical opera and traditional Chinese music.

The presented dissertation work is impressive with its thoroughness, comprehensiveness and exhaustiveness. The topic is relevant and suitable for dissertation, it is presented chronologically, abundantly supported by information from numerous and significant theoretical, scientific and artistic sources. The author's personal motivation in choosing the topic is related to the challenge to establish: "*the contradictions and connections between the Chinese folk singing and Western bel canto*" (p.10).

The work consists of 172 pages, of which 169 are the main text. The structure is standard - introduction, four chapters, conclusion, contributions of the dissertation, a list of publications on the topic and a bibliography of 34 titles in Chinese and Bulgarian, of which 31 are printed and 3 are internet sources.

The **introduction** presents the relevance and significance of the chosen topic with its theoretical and practical value. It examines in detail prominent and key studies on the teaching of the Chinese folk singing, the methods of singing and stage performance, and folk vocal theory. It sets the objectives, content and methods of research and outlines the difficulties and expected results.

The **first chapter** focuses on the development of the vocal music in Ancient China, starting with the antiquity, passing through the Classical period, the Middle Ages, and reaching the Modern period. It offers a structural, harmonic and artistic analysis of the various genres (folk and literary songs, court and religious vocal music), singing styles and forms of performance, and even comments on their accompaniment was commented on.

The **second chapter** focuses on the period of the New Age (1840-1949), in which new social vocal forms were established, such as the children's song and dance productions, the mass revolutionary song, the Yan opera genre, the national opera. It emphasizes the entry and influence of the Western Bel-canto. On the one hand, it actively interacted with the fashionable school songs, on the other - a number of composers created works of art, choral songs, oratorios and opera works in Western styles.

Chapter three concludes the chronological study of the vocal folk music in China, referring to four periods: 1949-1966 (formation of the Chinese academic vocal folk music), 1966-1976 (a period of stagnation), 1976-2000 (development), after 2000 to the present day (transformation).

Together, these three chapters outline the diversity and development of "*traditional folk singing through academic singing until the adoption and the integration of the Western singing*"

(p.20). As a result of this process, the author finds that "*the fusion of the vocal folk music with bel canto and popular music*" (p.94) shapes the cross-border pattern of the Chinese folk singing. This, in turn, is the reason for the disappearance of essential, authentic, unique elements that are characteristic of the traditional Chinese musical culture.

Most impressive in the dissertation work is the **fourth chapter**. In it the author skilfully analyses the education in folk singing in Bulgaria, and compares it with the education in China. He studies the characteristic features of the different folklore areas, the admission exams, the curricula, etc. In this chapter, Wang Shuaitong reaches the quintessence that the Bulgarian education strives for preservation and study of the original folk songs, in contrast to modern China, which abandons the roots of the folklore singing.

The **conclusion**, quite relevantly and with contributory significance, offers specific strategies for the development of the Chinese academic vocal folk music.

The stylistics, citations and structure of the dissertation fully correspond to the type of the scientific work. The summaries at the end of each chapter are made with precision and point the reader to the essential and the important in the text. In his thorough, analytical, valuable and neatly structured research, Wang Shuaitong not only manages to cover, explore and study the immense diversity of the Chinese folk singing, but also engages the reader emotionally. It is evident that the author affectionate about his folklore heritage, its preservation and prosperity.

Considering the contributing scientific and applied scientific qualities of the dissertation *A study of the dynamics of the vocal techniques in the Chinese academic folk singing*, and noting the diligence, personal attitude and activity of the author, as well as the magnificent work of the supervisor Prof Tony Shekerdzhieva-Novak, I confidently give my **positive** assessment and propose to the respected scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree *Doctor* in professional field 8.3 Music and dance art, scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art, to Wang Shuaitong .

09.04.2023

Plovdiv

Reviewer:

/Prof Stela Miteva-Dinkova,PhD /