

OPINION

by Prof Milena Shushulova-Pavlova, PhD, New Bulgarian University
on the dissertation work of **Wang Ye**, 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

Academic supervisor: Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak, PhD

Topic: A Comparative Analysis between the Peking Opera Jingju and the Italian Opera
for awarding educational and scientific degree Doctor
in Professional field 8.3. Music and dance art;

Biographical data

Wang Ye receives Bachelor degree at Quanzhou University in China (2006-2010) and Master degree at the Conservatorio di musicale Giovanni Battista Pergolesi in Italy (2011-2015). Mr. Ye is a baritone. He works as an administrative assistant at the Italian Music Academy Sophy Arte Musica. He studied with the famous tenor Nazzareno Antinori and with Mrs. Sabrina Trojse, and in 2015 he graduated from the National Conservatory of Music in Fermo and received an assistant scholarship from the Academy to participate in teaching process. During his studies in Italy, he obtains B2 language certificate for Italian from the University for Foreigners in Perugia. As a soloist, he participates in a number of concerts. In 2018, he began regular doctoral studies in Plovdiv – Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, supervised by Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak. Wang Ye has won the following awards: Finalist in the 7th Anita Cerquetti International Opera Competition in Italy (2017); Third prize at the First Montefano International Vocal Competition in Italy (2018); Second Prize (Belson Group) at the 21st PIETRO ARGENTO International Competition for Musicians (2018); Gold medal at the Festival of Slavic Vocal Music in Plovdiv (2019); First prize at the EUTERPE International Music Competition in Italy (2019); Grand Prix in Arts Festivals "Borovets 2020" of the Fourth International Competition for Chamber Music and Individual Artists. During his studies in Plovdiv, he participated in concerts and performances on behalf of AMDFA, as well as in productions of the opera *Ba-Ta-Clan* at AMDFA - Plovdiv in the Sofia National Theater; the opera *Rita* in Plovdiv, Academic Opera House theater and in 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively, at the First, Second and Third Festival of the Camera Opera in Sofia at the Palace of Culture, Lumiere hall.

Content of the dissertation

The dissertation was discussed and proposed for public defense at a meeting of the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev". It contains a total of 176 pages, which include: introduction, four chapters, conclusion, bibliography and appendices¹. The present text is a comparative analysis of two operas emblematic of the Eastern and the Western culture - the Peking Opera and the Italian Opera. The author traces their origin and development in the context

¹ - Chapter 1 *Origin and Development of the Peking Jingju Opera and the Italian Opera*, Chapter 2 *Comparative analysis of the Peking and the Italian opera through the works "The Drunken Concubine" and "Madame Butterfly"*, Chapter 3 *A Comparative Analysis of the Peking Jingju Opera and the Italian Opera*, Chapter 4 *Problems and constructive solutions for the two operas*

of the historical, cultural and philosophical differences typical of the place of their emergence. He analyses and compares the structure of the plots in the Peking and the Italian operas and the artistic images, as well as the specifics of the music and vocal performance in them.

Precisely formulated objectives and tasks of the dissertation

The many years of educational, scientific and research experience of the doctoral student, accumulated in China and Italy, is the reason for choosing the topic of the dissertation. The main object of research of the scientific work is the Peking Opera *Jingju* and the Italian opera style *bel canto*. The main goal of the research is the comparative analysis between the two national arts. A major task that the candidate sets for himself is the classification of sufficient documents and facts to be arranged scientifically, systematically and professionally in order to support in practice and effectively the comparative research and to prove his thesis. Empirical methods were used in the study, including survey and research of available literature, social surveys, field research and interviews, and observation. The dissertation also uses theoretical methods in the comparative studies, analyzes and summaries.

Significance of the researched problem in scientific and scientific-applied terms

The doctoral candidate Wang Yi defends the thesis that a more in-depth study of the two cultural phenomena - Peking Jingju Opera and Italian Bel Canto Opera, a more detailed understanding of their history and essence, is of great importance for the promotion and development of exchange and interaction between the two cultures – the Italian (European) and the Chinese (Asian). **Undoubtedly, the Western culture has influenced the development processes of the Peking Opera.** In a comparative study of the model of the Italian and the Peking opera, Wang Ye came to the conclusion that they both use the teacher-student system in their work. The use of this system is mainly due to the fact that both the Italian and the Peking Opera are practical arts, and the best "carrier" of inheriting the experience is the actors (singers) who practice and have extensive stage experience and serious singing skills.

Degree of knowledge of the problem and relevance of the used literature

Wang Ye has extensive experience and extensive education - both in China, and in Italy, and now in Bulgaria - under a serious vocal teacher - Prof Toni Shekerjjeva-Novak. He earned an assistantship that further committed him to responsibilities to the new generations of singers. The candidate makes an in-depth analysis of the two types of opera and of the two cultures - the Chinese and the Italian. I would say that his work seeks philosophical and sociological depth when reading the facts and data. The promotion and popularity of the Peking and the Italian operas today, as well as the problems that accompany them in their collision with technology and globalism, are of particular interest to his research. He suggests and cites ways to overcome obstacles and continue these valuable traditions in both cultures. It is discussed in detail how cinema, television, the Internet and modern technologies

can contribute to modernize the perception of the two operas and bring them closer to modern audiences. *"The modern opera productions, created out of love for the art, and responding to the needs of their authors and audiences, are unwittingly absorbed by the fast-food culture. Fortunately, the Peking Opera and the Italian Opera have promptly come to realize this problem, and make active improvements and studies, trying to integrate the ancient art in this era and breathe new life into it. ... The review of publications on the subject shows that television is also making great efforts in line with China's national policy to promote and popularize traditional culture. We must mention the existence of opera channels, both on the central television and on the local televisions, which broadcast opera programs. ... The Italian opera is not lagging behind the general tendency to make a bold attempt to broadcast its performances directly from the stage of its opera houses. The Metropolitan Opera in New York has decided to deal with the crisis caused by the competition of other arts by making a breakthrough and irrevocably entering the digital age of opera."* (Quotation from Ye's dissertation).

Correctness in citation

Wang Ye is accurate and correct in his quotations. He uses as a basis the bibliography, on which he built and proved his thesis.

Contributions of the dissertation

1. The dissertation is the first to compare the educational and hereditary models of the Peking Opera and the Italian Opera. The paper sheds light on the teacher-student relationships in the opera learning process. It is important with its analysis and ideas for possible borrowings of methods and approaches in vocal singing lessons. In a time of digitalization and pragmatism, when there is a certain setback from the sphere of art, the author traces the process and offers ideas for attracting, especially young people, to the world of opera productions. After comparative research and surveys with students and teachers studying vocal music in Chinese, Italian and Bulgarian music conservatories, as well as with actors, the obtained results are carefully analyzed in a comparative way. The work offers practical and effective suggestions and solutions for the problems that the two operas are currently facing.
2. The dissertation is the first comprehensive and systematic comparison between the Peking Opera and the Italian Opera. It summarizes the similarities and differences in the historical origins of the two operas, in the classification of roles as well as in vocal techniques. The linguistic features, musical characteristics and stage presence of the performers in the Peking and the Italian operas respectively are described and compared. The construction of the plot and the dramatic structure, as well as the ways of inheriting the art in the two operas, are traced in detail and in a comparative plan, taking into account the cultural and historical context of the process. *The Drunken Concubine* and *Madame Butterfly* are the operas that have been chosen as representative of the Chinese Opera and the Italian Opera, respectively, to be analyzed and compared in detail, in terms of their stage performance.

3. The research is also done with the hope that it could encourage the academic exchange between students studying the Peking Opera and the Italian Opera. The author believes that his work could be able to broaden the horizons of the specifics of Peking and Italian Opera and indirectly contribute to cultural exchange, which in turn will give people a deeper and better understanding of the two cultures.

Assessment of the compliance of the abstract with the main points and contributions of the dissertation work

The abstract corresponds to the dissertation work.

Personal qualities of the author (if the reviewer knows him)

I have no personal impressions of the candidate, but I congratulate both Wang Ye and his supervisor - Prof Toni Shekerjjeva-Novak for the wonderful work. Good luck in your future endeavors.

Publications on the topic of the dissertation

- **Ye, Wang**, *Origin and Development of the Peking Opera* – Yearbook of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv, 2020, pp. 139 - 147;
- **Ye, Wang**, *Specifics of the Peking Opera in Shanghai* - Spring scientific readings of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv, 2021, pp. 189-194;
- **Ye, Wang**, *Differences in the Stage Performance of Peking Opera* - Spring scientific readings of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv, 2021, pp. 195-202.
- **Ye, Wang**, *An introductory course in solfege in Bulgarian for Chinese* - translation and editing, Plovdiv, 2020. ISMN: 979-0-9021225-0-4.

In conclusion of this Opinion I will end with the following assessment:

The work of the doctoral student corresponds to the scientometric indicators for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", according to the Law on the development of the academic staff of Republic of Bulgaria.

The dissertation of **Wang Ye**, doctoral student at AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev” - Plovdiv, with academic supervisor: Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak, titled: *A Comparative Analysis between the Peking Opera Jingju and the Italian Opera*, together with his contributions with scientific and applied qualities, I consider it sufficient to give my convincing positive assessment and to propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance, to Eduard **Wang Ye**, according to the requirements of the Law for development of the academic staff in Republic Bulgaria.

Prof Milena Shushulova-Pavlova, PhD