

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof Eduard Sarafyan, PhD

on a dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Music Studies and Music Art, doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art with author

Yang Chang

titled

Historical development of the bel canto style and its use in vocal performances in different languages

with academic supervisor: Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva – Novak

General presentation of the procedure and the materials presented for review

Yang Chang's **dissertation** on *Historical development of the bel canto style and its use in vocal performances in different languages* meets the regulatory requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". The candidate has presented a work of 180 pages, in its size and content, meets the requirements for a complete and valuable scientific development in the field of vocal music.

The **abstract** is 34 pages, in which the author skillfully synthesized essential highlights of the research, which in turn are able to fully reveal the content of the dissertation work.

The personal **artistic biography** of the doctoral candidate reveals a rich artistic activity accompanied by prestigious awards from vocal competitions in China, Europe and the USA.

Brief biographical data for the candidate:

Yang Chang received Bachelor's degree from the China University of Media and a Master's degree from the Academy of Music in Rome - Italy. She currently works as a soloist at the Chongqing Opera in China and a doctoral student at the AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, with scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Toni Shekerdzhieva-Novak.

Artistic work

Yang Chang has participated in numerous opera productions and concerts, including performances of Rossini's *Stabat Mater* at the Church of San Nicolas of Tolentino in Rome; the role of Flora in Verdi's *La Traviata* at the Sala Academica, Rome; collaboration with the Arcus Regalis Orchestra in Albano, Italy to perform Vivaldi's *Magnificat-RV611* and *Gloria-RV 589*; joint performances with the University of Rome Symphony Orchestra "Muse" during the 14th Music Season 2018-2019 in Viterbo, the conference center in Rome and the university where she performed *Carmen*; collaboration with the Chongqing Symphony Orchestra to perform Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in D minor as mezzo-soprano; and appearing in original Chinese national operas *Coming Down the River*

Clear Water and *When the Dust Settles* as Han Yuying and Tusi's Wife. She also participated in *Nabucco*, *Suor Angelica*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and other operas.

Prizes and awards

- First place at the 2nd National Music Competition Giulianova City Trophy
- First place in the 13th and 14th China Golden Bell Opera Singing Competition
- Third place at the New York International Opera Competition, 2020.
- Excellent Award at the First Classical Chinese Song Contest

The dissertation submitted by Yang Chang is structured and formatted according to the requirements. The text consists of 180 pages, which includes an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, contributing points, appendices and used literature including 70 titles, of which 9 are in English.

The **choice of the topic** is determined by the motivation to analyze in detail the practical use of the bel canto style in vocal compositions of different styles and in different languages.

The **main goal** of the presented research is based on the clarification of the approaches differentiated in technical and vocal aspect when performing bel canto in works different in style and in a different language.

The **subject** of the study is large-scale and covers the origin and development of the European civilization, history of the European music, formation and development of the bel canto technique, the use of bel canto in vocal musical works, the use of bel canto in the performance of Italian, Russian and Chinese vocal works, as well as its use in view of the human physiology.

Chapter One examines the origins and early development of the vocal art, particularly in the context of ancient Greek culture, showing how singing evolved from the recitation of poetry to a complex independent artistic form. The section begins with ancient Greek poetry, distinguishing in detail the three main forms: epic, lyric and dramatic poetry, exploring their characteristics and functions in society. The author examines the importance of music education in Ancient Greece, drawing on the ideal educational model that requires not only an elegant writing style and command of languages, but also the skills of independent singing. In conclusion, the first chapter examines how music and singing were integrated into wider cultural and religious activities during the period from Ancient Greece to the Roman era, particularly how they helped to strengthen social cohesion and cultural identity.

The **second chapter** examines vocalization techniques in the bel canto style. First of all, scientific breathing training is central to bel canto singing. The main methods involve coordination of major muscle groups such as the pectoralis major, diaphragm and back muscles, as well as involvement of the abdominal muscles, anal sphincter, gluteus maximus and leg muscles. This full body breathing provides a steady and powerful airflow that supports long-lasting singing and complex tonal variations. The use of the articulation system is addressed as an essential component in Belcanto

singing. Given the specificity, this section of the dissertation would also be extremely useful for all wind instrument performers.

The **third chapter** conducts an in-depth analysis of the use of the bel canto technique in Italian, Russian and Chinese vocal works, revealing the significant impact of the language structure on the vocal performance, as well as the importance of cross-cultural vocal education and practice. This analysis has practical significance in many aspects, especially in the context of globalization, facilitating cultural exchange, increasing the quality of vocal education and enriching the world music market.

Contributions

- The dissertation systematically examines the use and adaptation of the bel canto style in vocal works in different languages;
- The dissertation includes a combination of history and theory, a cross-cultural comparison, providing practical guidelines for training teachers and students, as well as promoting international exchange;
- The study highlights the influence of language structure on singing techniques, showing how the bel canto technique is adapted and modified in different linguistic contexts;
- Through a concrete analysis of the use of bel canto in the three languages, the dissertation provides practical guidelines for training and technical exercises;
- Promotion of international exchange;
- The work provides new perspectives and in-depth analysis of the global application and development of bel canto.

In view of the above, I give my positive evaluation for Yang Chang's dissertation titled *Historical development of the bel canto style and its use in vocal performances in different languages* under the skillful scientific guidance of Prof Toni Shekerdzhieva – Novak. I believe that the dissertation fully meets the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria Act.

I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Yang Chang educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

15.09.2024

Plovdiv

Reviewer:

/Assoc. Prof Eduard Sarafyan /