

OPINION

by

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in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Arts

Doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

with author Yang Zhiyu

title: *Folk Features and Conductor Interpretations in the Chinese Choral Works*

Academic supervisor – Assoc. Prof Kiril Ivanov Chaplikov

General presentation of the procedure and materials received for review

By order of the Rector of the AMDFA "Prof. Asen Diamandiev" No. RD-27-095 dated 25.06.2024, I am appointed as a member of the scientific jury to supervise the defense procedure of Yang Zhiyu's dissertation on the topic *Folk Features and Conductor Interpretations in the Chinese Choral Works*. The procedure is for the acquisition of educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional field 8.3 Musical and Dance Art, doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art. The author of the dissertation is Yang Zhiyu - a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Music Pedagogy and Conducting, Faculty of Music Pedagogy at AMDFA "Prof. Asen Diamandiev". Yang Zhiyu was enrolled in the department on 25.11.2020 and discharged with Protocol No. 15 dated 15.12.2023 of the Faculty of Music Pedagogy Faculty. The doctoral student has submitted the required set of documents on paper and on magnetic media related to the procedure for defending the dissertation. I have no comments on the submitted documents and materials.

Brief biographical data of the doctoral student

Yang Zhiyu is an academic graduate of the Polish piano school – a Bachelor's degree from the Krakow Conservatory and a Master's degree in Gdansk. In his childhood and high-school years, he studied piano with famous Chinese pianists Professor Yang Ming, former dean of the Central Conservatory of Music, Professor Zhang Peili from the Music Department of Xiamen University, and Professor Zhu Yafen, former dean of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music, and he mastered conducting skills with the famous Chinese conductor Professor Yang Zhen. His professional career in China began as a piano teacher at the Huacheng Academy. Confirming his name and professionalism, Yang Zhiyu won the award for best accompaniment at the 9th All-Star Choir Tournament at the National Theater in Beijing. Only 35 years old, he is currently a piano and conducting teacher at Xiamen Huatian College in South China, director of the Xiamen Siming Musicians Association, and choir director of the Xiamen Siming Music Association.

Relevance of the topic

In addition to enriching the scientific research on the Chinese choral art, the dissertation *Folk Features and Conductor Interpretations in the Chinese Choral Works* provides a new and different

perspective on the study of the phenomena, namely – with an emphasis on the national characteristics such as ethnic elements, national rhythms, the widespread use of pentatonic, the polyphonic nature of Chinese musical thinking, the integration of modern musical elements in contemporary Chinese compositions. This, combined with the proposed effective conducting strategies and techniques, reflects in a current way and explores the influence of the exchange of Chinese and Western musical culture on the creation of music in today's globally integrated cultural environment. The study facilitates a deep understanding of the **uniqueness of the Chinese choral music and provides a theoretical basis for better conducting performances of vocal works by Chinese composers, which is an undeniable contribution to world music theory.**

Expedience of research methods for achieving the set goals

In the development of his dissertation, Yang Zhiyu used some of the most appropriate methods for such research, namely – analysis, classification, visualization, synthesis, personal experience. The analyzes he carries out are based on examples typical of the Chinese choral music, which places his conclusions on a broad and well-established basis. In addition to musical examples, the visualization is also enriched with diagrams illustrating the synthesized results and suggesting the direction of development. The author's classification of Chinese choral works based on regional ethnic groups is an indicator of the doctoral student's scientific invention and the in-depth research leading to a realistic outline of the future of the Chinese choir.

Evaluation of the dissertation work

The dissertation work *Folk Features and Conductor Interpretations in the Chinese Choral Works* reflects the depth of the research and the serious intentions of Yang Zhiyu to outline the present and the future of the Chinese choral music, as well as its ties to the traditional musical features and symbiosis with current world trends, intonations, rhythms. The bibliographic reference, called the "Sources" section, although entirely with Chinese authors, is impressive and clearly corresponds to the topic of the dissertation. It includes 81 monographs and 46 scientific articles and dissertations. The reliability of the material used is proven by the photocopies of scores of officially published works, by the correct translation of the titles of the scientific publications used, by the synthesized presentation of works related to the issue under consideration. The appendix, which illustrates some of the hypotheses of the doctoral student, is quite voluminous - with 18 complete scores.

The theoretical work is 193 standard pages long. The content and structure meet the scientific requirements – introduction, four chapters, conclusion, contributions, literature. The introductory section, called “Introduction”, summarizes several aspects of a scientific work – introduction, critical literature review, definition of the goal and methods, and the main text of the dissertation is grouped into four large sections/ chapters, correctly and in detail “distributed” into subtopics. Yang Zhiyu’s idea to present a summary –concentrating his research – of the work and the concluding summaries of each chapter, which prove his analytical approach, the ability to systematize and summarize the results of his research, makes an exceptionally good impression.

The four chapters – titled Folk Styles and Conductor Interpretations of Chinese Choral Works, Categories and Artistic Characteristics of Chinese Choral Works, Inheritance and Development of Folklore Traditions in Chinese Large-Scale Choral Works, Inheritance and Innovation in Contemporary Concepts for Creating Choral Works – cover an analysis of national styles and specific regional manifestations of Chinese choral music, a classification of works according to the degree of folklore connection, a description of the national characteristics of large-scale Chinese vocal cycles and an attempt to synthesize the elements of the current choral-compositional language in China based on an analysis of some contemporary choral works. Each analysis is accompanied by reflections on the “correct” conductor interpretation, consistent with the specific characteristics of the original source. As a practicing conductor, Yang Zhiyu “refracts” theory through his personal experience and in-depth reflection based on a broad theoretical base. The text is presented in a readable and understandable manner, which is a sign of the doctoral student's good communication skills.

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

The doctoral student presents three publications related to the topic of the dissertation work, presented in various scientific forums in three consecutive years – “Analysis of the Origin, Development and Features of the Chinese Choral Music” (2021), “Chinese Polyphonic Folk Songs – Analysis of the Musical Characteristics of the Great Song of the Dong People” (2022) and “Musical Analysis and Conducting Decisions in the Mixed Four-Voice Choral Part “Rage Fiercely, Yellow River”. These scientific reports clearly outline the discussed problems and follow the development of the present work.

Critical notes and recommendations

My recommendations are mainly in the technical "smoothing" of the text. Also, the volume of the abstract exceeds the permitted. If the doctoral student decides to publish the dissertation, I would recommend rethinking the examples given in the Appendix. These do not have to be the 18 complete scores, but selected passages from them.

Abstract

The doctoral candidate could have presented the text in a more synthesized manner, but in his desire to cover every detail, he has significantly exceeded the permissible volume. Nevertheless, I believe that the abstract recreates in a shortened form the entire text of the dissertation work, the ideas, the contributions and the bibliography as clearly as possible.

Conclusion

During his studies, doctoral student Yang Zhiyu has carried out extensive scientific work, through which he has obtained original and contributing results. The dissertation titled *Folk Features and Conductor Interpretations in the Chinese Choral Works* shows Yang Zhiyu's in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the field of musicology and musical art and demonstrates his qualities and skills for independent scientific research. Considering the above, I confidently give my

positive assessment of the scientific work presented in the dissertation, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, doctoral program "Music Studies and Musical Art".

I congratulate Mr. Yang Zhiyu for the serious scientific work. I also congratulate his scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Kiril Chaplikov for the successful guidance and achievement of the convincing final result.

11.09.2024
Plovdiv

Respectfully yours:
(Prof Rada Slavinska)