

## **REVIEW**

of

### **dissertation work**

for awarding educational and scientific degree Doctor

titled

### **ANALYSIS OF THE MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE CHINESE SCHOOLS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ETHNIC MINORITIES**

Professional field 1.3 Teaching Pedagogy in ...

Doctoral program: Methodology of Music Teaching,  
the Department of Music Pedagogy and Conducting

**Dai Liping**

Academic supervisor: Prof Tsvetanka Kolovska, PhD

The topic of the dissertation is extensive and affects the entire system of music education in China, from elementary to high school.

The study is based on the solid foundation of 121 thoroughly researched literary sources, of which 83 are Chinese and 38 are foreign. The significantly larger number of national studies considered is justified by the topic and the purpose of the research. The comments to the sources are well structured, short but meaningful. They are arranged chronologically, with the most important for the given historical period highlighted. In the chronological arrangement of the cited studies, the complex path of development of the music education in China, the role of prominent personalities in it, the influence of external factors, and the dependence of music education on politics can be clearly traced. In itself, this may provide directions for future research.

The author uses five different methods that must achieve the objectives of the study, the literature method already discussed being only one of them. She also uses:

- Analysis of questionnaires on the current and specific problems of individual primary, secondary and higher schools.

- The detailed understanding of the current situation, i.e. learning the point of view of teachers, school administrators and experts, as well as their ideas for reforms are reflected through the third method – interview.

- Naturally, the large volume of collected data requires appropriate processing to draw reliable conclusions. This should be the subject of the statistical analysis and summary method. In the dissertation we find percentage analyses.

A separate section examines the features of each of the eleven conservatories, listing their leading majors, their status, and some of the studied academic disciplines. The mentioned important international connections, cultural exchange and specific events clarify the extremely ambitious goals

of the higher schools for cooperation with the most prestigious higher schools in the world. In addition, the problems that need to be solved in the Chinese higher education institutions are discussed in detail. The author also points out specific recommendations for solving these problems.

Since the focus of the dissertation is the music education based on Chinese folk music and, in particular, the music education based on the folk music art of the various ethnicities in China, the problems facing the higher schools in this direction are most thoroughly highlighted and the author offers numerous and diverse corrective measures. They include both administrative measures and ideas for getting to know and building an emotional attitude to the music of the different regions. Among these ideas, the idea of emotionally perceiving, reacting, understanding, distinguishing and appreciating the music of the individual ethnicities makes a particularly good impression; skills to perform, to analyze this music, to teach it. This idea is also successfully linked to the cultivation of national self-esteem and national pride among the Chinese youth.

It is also extremely good practice to study music in the Chinese universities that are not specialized in music. The academic subjects are mandatory electives and ensure credits. This training aims to develop the evaluation abilities, the aesthetic knowledge, to increase the creativity and creative mind-set of the students, to improve their intellectual and emotional qualities and their balance, to develop their musical abilities and their personal characteristics, to improve their moral qualities.

The third chapter explores the specifics of music education in primary and secondary schools in China. A lean curriculum has been created, addressing a variety of target skills, with these requirements carefully graded according to the age of the students. It is interesting to note that while the expected performing skills in Grades 7-9 are very bold – students should achieve “*good instrumental habits*” (p. 67, in China it is a practice for students in the general schools to play musical instruments) and to learn to play 2-3 pieces per year, the aspects concerning music composition are largely cautious.

The author openly and frankly clarifies the actual musical abilities of the Chinese students in elementary and middle school. This question is investigated through a comprehensive multifaceted survey with questions covering different aspects of the musical skills. The interests in music among the young Chinese are also investigated.

Dai Liping discusses the value and significance of the traditional Chinese opera, and on the other hand, the stagnation of the opera art itself within the modern conditions and the reduced interest of young people in it, which justifies its introduction as a teaching material in the primary and secondary schools in China. The author, using the facts about the value of the Chinese traditional opera, rightly notes that its study contributes to the strengthening of the national self-confidence, since, in addition to being a form of art emblematic of the country, the traditional Chinese opera carries life values and virtues, i.e. with its syncretism – the bringing together of the effects of many arts, making the overall artistic product understandable and suggestive—is a powerful tool in the education of personalities.

Some innovative approaches are also described, such as the creation of musical groups involving able students and local theatre companies; training talented students in a local opera troupe who subsequently take part in performances of adapted works in the classrooms; training teachers to perform traditional Chinese opera; construction of places for student performances; creating costume and prop workshops involving students.

All the weaknesses of the modern Chinese music education are analyzed, and the doctoral student proposes measures to overcome each of the identified problems. Some of the proposed solutions are not stereotypical, for example, to compensate for the lack of teachers with solid training in economically backward and rural areas (and in some cases - lack of music teachers at all), the author suggests using a hybrid (combination of face-to-face and online form) on a training. Since this problem also exists in our country, I would recommend that the solution that Dai Liping tests in China be applied to Bulgarian musical education as well.

As particularly valuable, I would point out the idea of teaching the regional characteristics of the Chinese traditional opera and folk instrumental music. Introducing the students to the regional and ethnic features of the folk musical language is also applicable in Bulgaria, where the folklore areas have so far been studied only with their most characteristic features. With properly selected music, clear, concise, plain, memorable explanations, tasks, examples to be discussed and analysed, these specific features could evoke interest, a positive emotional response, an incentive to change the generally negative attitude towards the national folk music, even to increase the national self-awareness of the adolescent Bulgarians.

It is also a good idea to precede the music class with an individual search for information by the students on the subject of the lesson, recording the questions that have arisen, which in the classroom, the students can ask the teacher and these questions become the subject of a discussion, to share impressions, their excitement, their doubts. This is not only the basis of learning the information to be taught, but also brings the lesson to life, changing the role of the student from an "object" of learning to an active, experiencing and feeling participant with his thoughts, questions and emotions in the lesson. The author also suggests that after the lesson, the learners collect additional information about the musical works that they studied during the lesson, which leads to an even more complete contact with the perceived music, its meaning from the point of view of the newly discovered facts about it and more personally feeling her beauty.

As a certain weakness, I would point out that the potential role of the traditional Chinese music (and the musical art in general) in the education of the personal qualities of the youth is exaggerated. It is true that music can have a great effect on the listener, but, first, when taken in a school it must be very precisely selected with a view to the suggestion sought, secondly, it must be very impressively performed to make the effect perceptible to the adolescent and even to reinforce it, thirdly and not less important is that this music is properly taught by the teacher in the class, which also implies

- the development of quality teaching materials;
- very well thought out course of the lesson in advance;
- a personal example from the teacher of the attitude towards the taught music.

Acknowledging, coordinating and harmonizing the three components, rather than idealizing the impact of the tonal art itself, can ensure the success of the educational role of music for the young people.

The dissertation has a clear, overview structure, which allows the reader to quickly navigate the issues discussed in it.

Many of the results formulated by the candidate, as well as many of the proposals intended to deal with problems facing the music education in China, can serve as a basis for future research, and as already made clear, some proposals would work effectively if implemented in the Bulgarian music education system.

I agree with the originality of the contributions made.

The dissertation has a marked scientific and applied character. It thoroughly examines all the problems facing the Chinese music education system, and suggests appropriate practical solutions to these problems. The similarities and differences between the Chinese and foreign music education systems are compared, and their influence on the national music education system is taken into account. The development of the latter has been traced chronologically, and on this basis the reasons for consistent imitation of a certain foreign model for musical education have been deduced. The comprehensive set of collected and analyzed facts is impressively large and is itself among the merits of the dissertation.

Given the above arguments, I strongly recommend that Dai Liping be awarded the scientific and educational degree "Doctor".

Plovdiv, 27.03.2024, AMDFA

Reviewer:

Prof Krasimira Georgieva Fileva-Ruseva, PhD