

REVIEW

by Prof Daniela Andonova, PhD

National Academy of Music "Prof P. Vladigerov"

for the Dissertation of

Guo Rui

titled:

UNIVERSAL AND NATIONAL IN THE PIANO MUSIC OF CHINA IN 20TH CENTURY

for acquisition of educational and scientific degree

"Doctor", Professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art

In 2012, Guo Rui, China, was admitted Piano major in Harbin Normal University. In 2016, she entered the Harbin Normal University as a Master of Arts, she also studied at the Harbin Conservatory of Music. Since 2017, she has been teaching piano at the National Instrumental Music Department of the Harbin Conservatory of Music. In 2018, she joined the Professional Piano Committee of the Chinese Heilongjiang Musicians Association. In 2019, she taught piano at Yibin College in Sichuan Province.

Since February 2020, Guo Rui has been a doctoral student at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv under the supervision of Assoc. Prof Velislava Karagenova.

During her doctoral studies, Guo Rui had the following concerts - participation in concerts of students from the piano class of Assoc. Dr. Velislava Karagenova

- December 2022, Christmas Festival *Silent night, Holy night*, second concert

- 16 March 2023, Concert at the Confucius Institute of Veliko Tarnovo University

- 17 February 2023, Seventh anniversary concert of "Confucius" classroom at Plovdiv University

- 05.09.2023 Participation in a concert *Friends of Music*, organized by Micho Dimitrov

Awards:

- Honorable Mention at the Bach competition organized by AMDFA November 2021

- 21.11.2021, Second Prize at the ART-DUO International Music Competition for violin and piano duo, Prague, Czech Republic.

- 13-15 June 2022, International Competition for Young Musicians Zagreb 2022, Croatia, Second Prize in the category Piano K.

- 15-17 July 2022 Gold medal for piano and violin ensemble in the International Competition for Music, Dance and Visual Arts "Orpheus Talents".

The research shows a new perspective in considering China's musical culture, the specific continuity and relationship with the European music, and the relationship with the national identity of the Chinese music. The knowledge that the work provides has educational value for students,

performers and educators, for the correct understanding and interpretation of the style of Chinese composers and genres. This makes the Dissertation work relevant and valuable.

The topic is interesting and relevant. The thesis is structured clearly: introduction four chapters, conclusion, contributions, and impressive bibliography of 72 sources. This suggests in-deep study of the subject. The author gives 68 musical examples and analyzes 12 piano works. Many rhythmic patterns characteristic of the Chinese ethnicities in different regions have been explored, as have the types of pentatonic scales. This information, arranged in visual diagrams, is useful for learners and educators in China, but also for folklorists internationally.

The orientation of the research is theoretical-historical and has a special contribution for composers, theoretical researchers, pedagogues, students.

In the thousands of years of Chinese history, music occupies an important place in social and political aspects. The complex prerequisites, difficult periods and processes in the development of piano music from the introduction of the first keyboard instrument in China in the 19th century to the present day are examined.

The author also studies the creation and development of the music performance and composition school in a country geographically remote, politically and historically isolated over the centuries, which implies the retention and delay of the development of secular musical art compared to the developed countries in Europe and America.

Parallel to the influx of foreign influence of advanced musical, compositional and performance achievements, the composers in China asserted their national identity. This reveals a number of problems and raises many relevant questions for the Chinese artists, which is one of the aspects explored in the dissertation. Among them, the question of the national identity of a young professional culture, such as the Chinese, is of particular significance and relevance.

This work aims to present the stages of development with a thorough analysis. It studies the periods from the first professional composition attempts in China, the emergence from the anonymous folk art and folklore, to the creation, development and flowering of the professional school for composers, its difficult path over the years and reaching at an accelerated pace many of the achievements of the modern composers on the world stage. The gradual integration of the Chinese artists into the use of the entire palette of expressive musical means, compositional techniques and the possibilities of the piano instrument created in Europe over centuries and the aspiration to catch up and shorten this time as perception, understanding and way of thinking are examined. These processes within the 20th century are referred to as "Chinese cultural phenomenon" for a good reason.

The theoretical studies on the Chinese piano compositions of the 20th century, as well as studies that trace the processes of national style formation in the Chinese school of composers are generally a few. This makes the dissertation work relevant and important.

The author focuses on the role, place and importance of the folklore and the folk traditions in the process of forming a national style. She explores and substantiates the wealth of folklore material

available to the Chinese composers, with the diversity and distinctiveness of 56 minorities, each shaping their own, specific culture and style.

In the first two chapters of the dissertation are presented the historical data of the period from the introduction of the first keyboard instrument to China, the writing of the first compositions for the piano and the works created up to 1949. Guo Rui studies the interactions with traditional folk music, with other genres, with national and other instruments, as well as dependencies on political conditions for development. She outlines the highlights of the musical skills and the used means of expression, as well as the gradual "mental" entering into the depths of the professional art of composition. She also offers insights on the plot direction of the composers, bearing in mind the titles of the plays created in this period (for example, the abundance of program plays with storylines from everyday life, folklore and nature), as well as the gradual expansion and enrichment of the issues that concern the authors - psychological states and emotions.

The third chapter examines works created in the postwar period (after 1949) and the state of culture in the dramatic period of the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1977) for China.

The fourth chapter reflects the rise of the development of the Chinese piano and composition art, the inclusion of all modern contemporary trends worldwide, their entry and impact in China, and the opening of China to creative exchange with the whole world. These are all factors that bring China out of isolation, and the composers of the 21st century create wonderful musical piano samples.

The thesis includes the biographies, works and musical pursuits and style of the brightest composers from various musical centers in greater China: Zhao Yuenren, He Lutin, Chew Wei, Ding Shande, Wang Lishan, Chu Wanhua, Li Yinghai, Quan Jihao.

The dissertation work also discusses the development and differentiation of the genre orientation of the piano compositions, as well as the development and complication of the chosen musical forms. Characteristic of the beginning of the 20th century are marches and songs in small forms: one-part, simple two-part or simple three-part. The gradual change in the artistic thinking of the creators, the enrichment of genres and musical forms, the reflection of new ideas, and means of expression to which the composers turn in the late 20th and early 21st centuries are traced: piano suites, cycles, sonatas, complex rhapsodic forms, polyphonic layering, searches for sound effects and a wide range of registers. The analyses of the works invariably focus on the composers' quest to consistently assert their national identity, combining it with the desire to implement and master contemporary world musical trends, interactions and styles.

The candidate Guo Rui lists the following contributions, which I accept:

1. This dissertation systematically describes the history of the development of the Chinese keyboard music in the 20th century, within the context of the search for national identity.
2. It offers summaries and conclusions about the development of keyboard music according to the selected issues.

3. The dissertation offers detailed analysis of representative piano works, important for the development of the studied processes. These are works showing the directions and trends for the development of the Chinese music in the 20th and 21st centuries. Using this analysis, we can travel through time and space, have a "dialogue" with the composer, and when we understand every detail of the works, we can also understand the reason why these works occupy an important place in the Chinese music history.

4. In addition to the specific analyses, a huge amount of piano works that find a place in the repertoire of Chinese pianists and become part of the pedagogical repertoire in educational institutions are also covered.

The bibliography used is very extensive and shows the depth of the research. The use of sources from Bulgarian authors (V. Karagenova, N. Stoykov, E. Kolarova, Iv. Khlebarov), as well as English is also impressive, which speaks of professional searches for enriching one's own knowledge of the world stylistic and compositional trends and phenomena of the 20th century.

The doctoral student has concert performances with a repertoire of the researched works. She also has three publications on topics related to the topics of the dissertation work, thus fulfilling all the requirements of the Law on Scientific Degrees and Scientific Titles.

In conclusion:

Having considered the contribution nature of the dissertation titled *Universal and National in the Piano Music of China in 20th Century*, I propose with full conviction to the scientific jury to award Guo Rui the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

Sofia, 20.03.2024

Prof Daniela Andonova, PhD