

REVIEW

by Prof Alexander Vasilenko, PhD

on a dissertation work

for awarding educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

in professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art,

doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art

titled: *Characteristics and Development of the Piano Accompaniment in the Vocal Music of the*

Chinese Composers from the 20th century to the Present Day

Author: Huang Boyu

academic supervisor Prof Lyudmil Petkov, PhD

1. General presentation of the procedure and the materials received for review

The documentation provided for the procedure meets the requirements. It includes: dissertation work of 191 pages (not including the title page and the table of contents), which contains: Introduction and five chapters (three main chapters, fourth – Conclusion and fifth - Contributions); references (32 sources from Chinese authors, translated literature and periodicals, as well as 16 Internet sources); appendixes related to the Chinese Art Song concert held on 21.05.2022 at AMDFA under the title "I Miss my Motherland ", directly related to the topic of the dissertation.

- List of the author's publications related to the dissertation work.
- The three publications by the author in the relevant editions.
- Curriculum vitae of the doctoral candidate (European format).
- Rector's order to enroll Huang Boyu as a doctoral student in an individual form of study.
- Rector's order to discharge the doctoral student.
- Reference for the contributions of the dissertation work.
- Abstract of 40 pages (not including the title page and the table of contents).

2. Biographical data of Huang Boyu

According to the provided CV (European format), Huang Boyu, in addition to his native Chinese, is fluent in Bulgarian, Italian and English. In 2014, he completed Bachelor's program in Tianjin Conservatory of Music, China. In 2017, he receives Master's degree as a pianist at the Conservatory of Music Giovanni Battista Pergolesi - Italy, and obtains second Master's degree in major Piano Accompaniment at the same educational institution in 2019. From 2020 to 2023, he is a doctoral student in individual form of studies at the Department of Piano and Accordion – AMDFA, Plovdiv.

3. Relevance of the topic

From a professional and, in a broader aspect, from a cognitive point of view, the formation and development under the influence of the Western European musical tradition of three main

varieties in the Chinese vocal music - the art song, the musical adaptation of classical verses and the traditional opera (actually vocal-scenic genre). On the one hand, the very fact of interaction and combination between two such significant and historically conditioned different cultural-aesthetic traditions is part of the global process of globalization. In this case, this process is even more indicative, since it takes place dynamically, within only one century and in the conditions of presumably very different, rapidly changing and even polar socio-economic, political and cultural conditions. At the same time, from the point of view of the piano specialist, the peculiar role of the piano accompaniment as a decisive factor in achieving an authentic and convincing artistic result in the context of the specific national means of expression, is a very interesting and significant topic for research.

4. Expediency of the research methods used to achieve the set goals

In the introduction to the dissertation, the author indicates the three methodologies he uses in his research – empirical, theoretical and comparative. The empirical methods allow for reaching real research conclusions based on the collected objective data. The theoretical methodology interprets the features and the evolution of the piano accompaniment in the vocal music of Chinese composers through musical, aesthetic and cultural theoretical categories. The comparative methodology, using what the author defined as "long-term" and "cross-sectional" comparative research, compares various aspects and highlights common points, differences and trends in the development and peculiarities of the piano accompaniment in the three identified different types of vocal compositions. I find all three methods appropriate and actually used in the present study.

5. Evaluation of the dissertation work

The dissertation work is well structured and balanced regarding the three main, symmetrically developed chapters on which the study is built. Each of these chapters focuses on one of the so-called three main varieties of Chinese vocal music - Chinese Art Song, Art Songs Based on Classical Poetry, Chinese National Opera (with an emphasis on the Chinese opera in modern times). Each chapter has subsection on the origin, directions and lines of development, analysis of characteristic landmark works, and conclusions and summaries, which is a good indicator of a solid and balanced research approach. The doctoral student undoubtedly possesses the adequate professional competence and analytical skills, as well as the practical knowledge of the specific subject. Something characteristic, however, is that his attitude towards the artistic imagery is often undisguisedly emotional and aimed at more than direct perception and interpretation of the musical messages contained in the text, which in some places clearly contradicts the norms adopted for a scientific study. As a personal recommendation about the structure, my opinion is that the chapter four and five of the thesis should appear as *Conclusion* and *Contributions*, and not as separate chapters. In general, at the same time, I give a positive assessment of the dissertation work – the approach in the analytical part is convincing

and leads to a clear result (in my opinion, the analytical work in the third chapter is somewhat vulnerable in its parsimony, as it mainly concerns the piano problem - still, I give that of the genre specificity that implies working with a transcribed text). The goals, set by the author of the study – the identification of trends and directions in the development of Chinese musical culture in the vocal field and the influence of the European tradition on it; tracing the similarities and the differences of the three main vocal genres in the Chinese music; the research, through specific examples, of the development and specificity of the piano accompaniment in the context of the mentioned vocal genres – have been achieved in this work, which is the most important condition for finding a positive result.

6. Contributions and significance of the thesis and the relevant publications

I will agree with the contributions pointed out by the doctoral student, some of which are clearly outlined in the enclosed publications on the subject.

- The systematic tracking of the trends in the development of the vocal works in their national (Chinese) cultural context is another convincing proof of the cosmopolitan character of the world art, enriched by interaction with the national specificity in each specific case - especially noticeable in significant, ancient, multilayered and unique cultural tradition, such as the Chinese.
- The development and the characteristics of the piano accompaniment in the three main directions of vocal art in China during the last century are summarized.
- The research has a direct practical value thanks to the analysis of the texture, intonation and genre characteristics of the piano accompaniment in the context of the identified three main directions of the Chinese vocal art.
- The individual stages in the development of the Chinese vocal music, and the piano accompaniment inherent in the various genres, are highlighted – this contribution is also clearly demonstrated in the form of a concert, documented in the appendix to the dissertation.

7. Critical remarks and recommendations

The format and the size of this review do not suggest more detailed corrections, so I will limit myself to more generalized findings.

- I strongly recommend correcting a number of fragments containing names of tones, tonalities, modes, rhythmic figures. A closer look will easily reveal quite a few inconsistencies and strange terminology decisions in this sense (just one characteristic example - page 52 of the Pdf file of the dissertation, immediately after example 26).

- I agree with the statement in chapter five Contributions that "The dissertation contributes to the spiritual exchange between China and Bulgaria: two countries with a distinctive national musical culture", insofar as the research is done in Bulgaria, and the accompanying concert was performed in front of a Bulgarian audience. However, I do not find as a serious argument in this sense the doctoral student's performance of the Chinese song How could I not think about her (composer Huang Zi,

lyrics Zhao Yuanzhen), which has (in his opinion) a similar musical style and mood to the Bulgarian folk song. Mesechinko liu grelivka.

I also do not find a direct semantic connection with the contribution part of the dissertation work on the relatively extensive characterization of Bulgarian folk music and, for example, Bela Bartok's research interest in the specifics of uneven rhythms. I advise that this fragment be reconsidered and, possibly, relocated in another section and in another context.

8. Abstract

The abstract is prepared carefully and balanced, it truthfully represents Huang Boyu's dissertation work in terms of content, structure and semantic accessibility.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, based on my above impressions, I vote “in favour” and recommend to the respected members of the scientific jury that Huang Boyu be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

04.10.2023

Prof Alexander Vasilenko, PhD