

REVIEW

Prof Lyudmil Borisov Petkov, PhD

of dissertation work for

awarding educational and scientific degree Doctor

Professional field **8.3. Music and Dance Art**

Doctoral program **Music Studies and Music Art**

Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts

Faculty of Music Pedagogy

AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev” – Plovdiv

Titled:

Historical Aspects in the Development of the Chinese Violin Art in the Period 1919 - 2008

Author: **YIHAN GAO**

with academic supervisor: Prof Stela Miteva-Dinkova, PhD

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

The documentation of the procedure for the defense before a scientific jury of a dissertation work with author Yihan Gao is completely in order. The following statutory mandatory documents are presented:

1. Order No RD-27-030/16.02.2024 for the appointment of a scientific jury by the Rector of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv.
2. Order No RD-2727-009/25.01.2024 for discharge, based on the decision taken by the faculty council at the Faculty of Music Pedagogy - Protocol No 17/16.02.2024.
3. Dissertation work consisting of 172 pages. The structure of the work is Introduction, four chapters, Conclusion, Contributions, Bibliography.
4. Abstract of 60 pages with subsequent Conclusion, Contributions, Bibliography and Internet sources. 55 bibliographic and 42 internet sources in Bulgarian, Chinese and English were used.
5. List of the author's publications related to the dissertation, four in number – 3 issued in the Republic of Bulgaria and 1 in the Republic of North Macedonia.
6. CV

2. Brief biographical data

Yihan Gao began his musical studies in 2011 in Li Feng's violin class at Harbin Normal University (HNU) Conservatory of Music. In 2015, he graduated with a Bachelor's degree. A year later, he continued his education in a Master's program in Violin. His teacher is the famous Chinese musicologist and conductor Prof Tao Yabing, and his first violin teachers are Li Feng and Andrey Fedchenko. In 2018, he became a scholarship holder of the University, and in 2019 he graduated with a solo recital.

In 2018, Yihan Gao joined the Chinese -Russian Chamber Orchestra of the Harbin Conservatory of Music, with whom he participated in a television broadcast by CCTV - Beijing in May 2018.

2019 marked the beginning of his teaching career as a full-time violin teacher at Yibin University in Sichuan Province, China.

In February 2020, Yihan Gao began his studies in the doctoral program of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Pro. Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv. In October 2020, the one-year regular training course in Bulgarian language and specialized subjects ends.

The average grade of the exams passed is 6.00.

From 2021 to the current year 2024, Yihan Gao is a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Classical and Pop and Jazz Performing Arts - AMDFA, Plovdiv, with supervisor Prof Stela Miteva-Dinkova, PhD.

His artistic work during the period 2021-2024 is associated with participation in concerts and festivals in Plovdiv, Sofia and the country.

Awards:

- Second prize in the Violin category at the Heilongjiang Music Competition (2018)
- Second prize at the International Chamber Music Competition in Prague (2021)
- Golden Lyre Award at the "Orpheus Talents" International Competition for Music, Dance and Visual Arts (2022)

3. Relevance of the topic

In the history of the development of Chinese violin art, now is the moment for a summary, for a comprehensive assessment of its evolution, place and understanding not only in the proportions of the mutual exchange between Chinese and Western cultures, but also of its specific trajectory, which has determined the essential trends in its development. This timely endeavour in scientific research reflects on clarifying the key moments in the dialogue between the educational system in its interaction with the social, cultural and economic spheres.

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

The research methods that the candidate indicates in his introduction include:

Review of scientific literature sources

Historical research method

Comparative research method

The author's research conclusions are based on a wide range of sources, which provides objective adequacy in support of the achieved scientific results. The study of a large volume of archival and current documents compares, reveals and determines the significance and role of the various aspects of the dynamics of the overall development of the violin art in the country.

The characterization of the different periods in this development clearly defines the representative innovations, connections and differences between them in support of clearly argued research conclusions.

5. Evaluation of the dissertation

Yihan Gao's dissertation is well balanced between its individual chapters. Its structure is built clearly, consistently and with sub-chapters filling the informational need in detail. Summaries at the end of each chapter focus the main lines of development and give a well-articulated view of a robust research approach. **Undoubtedly, Yihan Gao possesses an analytical ability based on serious professional competence.**

In the first chapter of the work, the historical prerequisites for the appearance of a suitable foundation for the development of violin art are chronologically presented from the most essential factors for this - from the appearance of the violin in the imperial court, through the consequences of the First Opium War, the role of the missionary schools in the spread of the Western musical culture, the basics of violin training and the contribution of the Japanese violin teachers, to the appearance of the first symphony orchestra, which included a large number of professional musicians from Russia. The author highlights the role of the school songs as means of adopting and spreading the Western culture. It is in the adaptation of Chinese texts with original foreign melodies that the doctoral student sees the most natural way for incorporating the Chinese society into the intonation and metro-rhythmic features of the Western music.

The second chapter of the work is dedicated to the development of the Chinese violin art in the period 1919-1949. Here, the changes in the approach and the processes that amplify the interaction between the local tradition and the European achievements, are truthfully presented. The stages leading to the formation of a new Chinese style reflecting the national spirit and character are well arranged and logically linked.

Using visual materials (tables, textbooks, photos, programs, facsimiles and sheet music examples) and rich factual material, the doctoral student has presented the work of the pioneers in the creation of the violin art, the first higher schools and conservatories. Of particular interest are the presented curricula, the way in which the teaching materials are standardized, the various methods and approaches in the pedagogical process. In their analytical part, the works considered as an illustration of the established norms are well substantiated in terms of terminology and content.

Chapter Three discusses the characteristic division of the Chinese culture into the periods (phases) before and after the Cultural Revolution. The natural effect of the political events on culture, in general, dominates here with particular force. An impressive chapter with its abundance of information and analyticity, the concluding part of which is dedicated to the first major work – concerto for violin and orchestra *The Legend of the Butterfly Lovers* and the works of the educators who contributed to the integration of teaching with society and concert practice.

The fusion of the possibilities for expression of the European classical instruments and the melody of the Chinese folk music, in other words, to highlight the Chinese stylistics, its peculiar narrative and national characteristic, and the steps in the preparation of how to make this happen, determines the emphasis in the perception of the violin art, as part of the national culture.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the period of progress - 1978 - 2008. It discusses in detail the educational reforms in the organization of training, representative violin teachers, teaching literature, Lin Yao Ji's method of violin training, luthier work and world-renowned Chinese performers. Upgrading towards reaching the standards of the Western performing schools and crystallizing the Chinese cultural identity through the specific style of art.

6. Contributions and significance of the thesis

The contributions listed by the candidate are in agreement with the content of the presented work and I accept them in their entirety.

1. The almost centuries-old evolution of the Chinese violin art, which grew under the influence of certain historical, political, geographical and socio-cultural factors, is studied;
2. The main educational institutions were defined, the formation of leading pedagogical schools and the beneficial foreign influences are clarified.
3. The creation of various teaching aids with their advantages and disadvantages, which are a significant contribution to the formation of a comprehensive instrumental and pedagogical tradition in violin education, which fits into the context of general violin art, is commented in detail.
4. The creative pursuits, stylistic characteristics and way of creating violin works by Chinese composers are studied. The commentary on them leads to an understanding of the inheritance and innovation of the violin repertoire by Chinese authors and to some extent enriches the international vision of the violin literature.

7. Recommendations and critical remarks

1. I would recommend greater attention in defining and clarifying the scientific methodology in the introduction, as well as expanding the scope of the hypothesis in the details that form it, since in the course of its proof, scientific knowledge is upgraded in the research.

2. As a valuable source of information for other researches on the subject and because of its cultural, scientific and informative value, I recommend the work to be published in a book.

8. Abstract

The abstract adequately presents the content of the main work and correctly provides its semantic context.

CONCLUSION

The doctoral student demonstrates professional competence and maturity and a style and culture of expression, which combined with the in-depth analysis and scientifically achieved research results give me the reason to vote “in favour” and propose to the respected scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" in professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, doctoral program Music Studies and Music Art to Yihan Gao.

I congratulate Yihan Gao and his scientific supervisor Prof Stela Miteva-Dinkova for the result of their joint work.

21.03.2024
Plovdiv

Reviewer:
Prof Lyudmil Petkvo, PhD