

## REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Georgi Asenov Arnaudov,  
New Bulgarian University, professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art",  
on the acquisition of the educational and scientific  
degree "Doctor" in the professional field 8.3.  
"Music and Dance Art" with candidate Yi Lisha

The dissertation presented to me for review by Yi Lisha on the topic **"Vocal, Dramatic, and Stylistic Features of the Interpretation of Leading Female Roles in "Madama Butterfly" and "Turandot" by Puccini. A Comparative Analysis with Leading Female Characters in Chinese Opera"** is developed within a textual volume of. The dissertation text consists of: **Abstract, Introduction, Chapter 1: Puccini's Operas "Madama Butterfly" and "Turandot", Chapter 2: Chinese Opera "Cang Yuan", Chapter 3: Comparison of the Three Operas, Conclusion** with: I. Research findings II. List of Contributions and **References** I. Bibliography II. Quoted literature. Each of the three chapters contains its own subchapters and separate parts within the subchapters, creating an extremely clear structure for the dissertation text, comprehensiveness, accuracy, and precision in presenting the theses, and a visible balance between the chosen empirical and theoretically developed material.

Here, at the beginning of my opinion, I must point out that the topic is of high significance not only in a scientific but also in an applied scientific context, both in terms of the choice of topic and the chosen approach. Such a topic is not discussed in our musical-scientific literature and no information can be found on the development of such a problem as a dissertation study in Bulgarian in the existing database of the National Centre for Information and Documentation (NCID). Such a study can easily be accepted as contributory, and a topic focused on the comparison and in-depth comparative analysis of

connections, models, and typologies between examples of European and Chinese opera has not been previously discussed in our national musicology.

Here, I must point out that not only the selection of the topic but also the entire research and the logical structure of the text are excellently constructed, and they can be deemed significant and contributory.

In the introduction, the reasons for choosing the topic are clearly and accurately outlined, presenting the personal motivations of the dissertation candidate, and the subject of the research, as well as the main objectives and tasks, are defined precisely and clearly. The aim of the research is clearly delineated, focusing on the examination of the connections and various aspects in the performance of leading female roles in Far Eastern opera. This has been achieved in the best possible way, with precision in describing the social and cultural context, which are taken as foundations and premises for understanding the unique cultural characteristics in China for adapting opera to dynamically evolving times, developing plots, and vocal styles with distinctive Chinese characteristics.

The subject of the research is clearly outlined in the introduction of the dissertation. It focuses on the leading female roles in two operas by the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini, which are centered on Eastern themes: "Madama Butterfly" and "Turandot," as well as the main female role in the opera "Cang Yuan" by the Chinese composer Xu Zhanhai. Here again emerges the main objective of the study, which is: "to compare the vocal, dramaturgical, and stylistic features of the interpretation by the two composers and the leading female roles in their operas."

Throughout the text of the dissertation research, it is evident that Lisha Yi possesses a high degree of familiarity with the state of the problem, abundant

information, as well as clarity and extensive knowledge of the three chosen operas. Here, it is important to highlight her precise and detailed understanding of the creative strategies in the dramaturgical and musical style of Puccini, with sharply defined characteristics and features of the leading female roles in his two selected operas. Additionally, the excellent presentation of the world-renowned contemporary Chinese composer Xu Zhanhai and his opera "Cang Yuan" deserves recognition. The prehistory of the creation, an overview of the work with its musical language, and characteristics of the protagonists, as well as an exploration of approaches in the artistic interpretation of the main female roles, are clearly and contributively outlined. A significant focus is given to the leading female role of Narengawa and her key role in the dramaturgy of the work.

For me, the third chapter of the dissertation is crucial, contributory, and the most important. It presents an in-depth analytical comparison between the three studied operas and goes beyond that. I would call it an in-depth research analysis of the intercultural connections between East and West. This analysis is based on a clear understanding of the key historical premises of cultural development, particularly in music, in different regions, as well as on the investigation of the characteristic, distinctive features of the three operatic works examined.

Thus considered, the text of the dissertation demonstrates a high degree of alignment between the methodology and research methods chosen by Lisha Yi and the set goals and tasks of the dissertation work.

Publications by the doctoral candidate related to the dissertation topic are also presented in the dissertation text. These are:

Yi, Lisha. "The Chinese composer Xu Zhanhai and his operatic masterpiece 'Cang Yuan': a fusion of the eastern and western in music." In:

Young Scientific Forum for Music and Dance: Conference with International Participation. Sofia: New Bulgarian University, Department of Music, 2007- ISSN 1313-342X (print), NBU Publishing House, vol. 18, 2023.

Yi, Lisha. "On the similarities and differences of singing methods between Europe and China in Belcanto." In: Young Scientific Forum for Music and Dance: Conference with International Participation. Sofia: New Bulgarian University, Department of Music, 2007- ISSN 1313-342X (print), NBU Publishing House, vol. 17, 2022.

I have reviewed the texts of the both publications and can confidently classify them as valuable and closely related to the research topic. It should be noted that both publications are included in editions that are part of the national reference list of contemporary Bulgarian scientific publications with peer review. It allow me to conclude that they fully meet the requirements of the Regulations on the Implementation of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act for the presence of published materials in specialized publications in the field of the arts.

Additionally, eight concert performances by the doctoral candidate are presented, which, along with the two publications, meet the requirements of the Regulations for the Application of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB).

I am familiar with the basics of the summary presented to me by the doctoral candidate, which contains 23 pages. I fully accept the contributions outlined in the dissertation text, which focus on describing and identifying appropriate methods and directions for interpreting the leading female roles in Eastern operas, defining common contextual similarities between Eastern and Western cultures, and describing important points of mutual influence between Eastern and Western music. Additionally, the dissertation introduces one of the

key composer figures of contemporary Chinese musical culture, Xu Zhanhai, to Bulgarian musicology, and lays the foundations for modern platforms for collaboration and means of mutual influence and exchange of Eastern opera productions among the three nations with ancient musical traditions: Italy, Bulgaria, and China.

Based on my above-mentioned comments, notes, and reflections, I allow myself to highly and deservedly evaluate both the entire practical activity of Lisha Yi and the overall work on this research and the writing of the dissertation. Here, I would like to specifically congratulate the scientific supervisor of the doctoral candidate, Prof. Dr. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova, for her invaluable assistance and work with Lisha Yi, as well as for her pedagogical support in writing the dissertation text.

With this, I would like to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Lisha Yi the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the specialty 8.3. "Music and Dance Arts".

Sofia, 15.05.2024 г.

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