

## **STATEMENT**

by Assoc. Prof. Hristo Karagyozov, Ph.D.

**regarding a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"**

**Topic: "The Development and Integration of the Saxophone in China Over the Past 20 Years – A Methodological Perspective"**

**Author:** Wang Jiaxin

**Supervisor:** Assoc. Prof. Dr Rositsa Becheva

**Field of Study: Musicology and Musical Arts Institution: New Bulgarian University,  
Department of Music**

### **Biography and artistic profile of the doctoral candidate**

Wang Jiaxin was born in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, China. His professional career has been marked by early recognition in saxophone performance, as evidenced by the numerous awards he received in his teens. His academic training commenced at Tianjin Normal University (2009–2013), where he obtained a bachelor's degree in music performance. He subsequently pursued his education in Bulgaria at New Bulgarian University, where he obtained two master's degrees: in music performance (saxophone, 2020–2022) and in sound engineering (2024).

With regard to the candidate's performance, it is notable that they have studied under distinguished teachers, including Professor Li Manlong (Central Conservatory of Music, China) and Dr Trifon Trifonov (NBU, Bulgaria). His creative achievements have been recognised with prestigious awards: the saxophonist was awarded first prize at the Saxophone Competition in Tianjin and first prize (gold medal) at the 16th International Competition for Young Performers in Pernik. In addition, he was awarded the Special Prize for Wind Orchestra Soloist and the title of 'Young Performer' at the same event. This interdisciplinary training enables him to analyse musical material from the perspectives of both performer and sound engineer.

### **Relevance and Significance of the Research Topic**

Wang Jiaxin's proposed dissertation is a comprehensive and multifaceted study of one of the most dynamic processes in contemporary Far Eastern musical culture: the establishment of the saxophone as a key instrument in China. The relevance of the topic is attributable to the country's unparalleled cultural and educational ascent over the past two decades, a period during which Western musical instruments experienced a renaissance in their development.

The author correctly identifies the need for a theoretically grounded "Chinese model" of integration. The study is valuable because it analyses how an instrument of distinctly Western origin transforms upon encountering another culture, as well as the resulting synthesis with the millennia-old Eastern tradition. The work is of significance from both a musicological and a pedagogical and acoustic perspective. As a dual-qualified professional combining expertise in sound engineering with proficiency in wind instrument performance, I found the research proposal of significant interest.

### **Methodological Framework of the Study**

The work consists of 136 pages, including an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, scientific contributions, and appendices. The methodological framework is interdisciplinary as follows:

The instrument's migration can be traced using historical-genetic analysis.

The present study employs the comparative method to analyse the European classical school, the American jazz tradition, and the emerging Chinese school. The employment of empirical methodology and music-theoretical analysis is applied to specific musical illustrations and performance techniques.

#### **An Analysis of Chapter One: Genesis, Historical Retrospection, and Westernisation**

The study's foundational premise is established in Chapter One through a detailed sociocultural analysis. Wang Jiaxin examines the historical progression of the saxophone, commencing from its inception in 1846 and culminating in its subsequent transformation into a globally recognised symbol. In this particular context, the process of Westernisation is of fundamental importance. Westernisation can be defined as the process of adoption of Western cultural and technological models in China.

The author has divided this process into distinct stages, commencing with the initial "cultural import" via military bands in the early 20th century, followed by the zenith of jazz in Shanghai, often referred to as the "Paris of the East". The subsequent "revival" phase emerged following a temporary hiatus in 1978. Of particular scholarly interest is the analysis of the institutionalisation of education, in which the author examines the transition from self-taught musicians to a strictly academic system within Chinese conservatoires.

The following analysis is offered of Chapter Two, which is entitled 'Cultural Integration and Artistic Synthesis'.

The second chapter constitutes the core of the study from a cultural-theoretical perspective. In this section, the intricate process of hybridisation is analysed. The author examines the saxophone's adaptation to Chinese folk aesthetics, focusing on changes in sound production.

The focus of this study is the "tuning" of the instrument. The author employs his expertise in acoustics to demonstrate how alterations in embouchure, along with designated "glissandos" and microtonal deviations, enhance the saxophone's ability to emulate conventional instruments such as the dizi or erhu. The section on jazz highlights the transformation of improvisation from a harmonic, "vertical" orientation to a melodic, "horizontal" one, characteristic of Eastern musical thinking.

### **Analysis of Chapter Three: Methodological Paradigms and Pedagogical Innovations**

This chapter is of particular practical significance. Wang Jiabin draws parallels between the French school, characterised by precision and tonal richness, and the American school, which emphasises freedom and improvisation. He identifies a "methodological vacuum" in early Chinese education and proposes his own model based on "**emotional programming of performance**".

The author critically examines the fact that, despite their technical proficiency, Chinese students frequently encounter challenges in achieving stylistic authenticity. The proposed methodology integrates technical exercises with psychological preparation and detailed acoustic analysis of the sound (including the influence of the mouthpiece, the reed, and the air column's resonance in the tube). The role of competitions is analysed not merely as a contest, but as an educational platform that stimulates progress.

### **Analysis of Chapter Four: Applied Analysis of the Repertoire**

In this chapter, the author deconstructs iconic works. The analysis of the folk song "**Jasmine Flower**" illustrates how theoretical concepts of synthesis are realised in practice. The author delineates specific fingering and techniques for achieving the quarter-tone intonation characteristic of Chinese folklore.

In the oeuvre of **Professor Li Manlong** (for example, "Yearning Theme and Variations"), the combination of the European variation form with specific Chinese sensibility is traced. The author puts forward a series of interpretive solutions for the "altissimo" register and complex multiphonics (a specific interpretive technique). These solutions demonstrate that the contemporary Chinese saxophonist is a figure of synthesis; that is, a musician who has mastered Western technique but who also feels through the categories of his national culture.

### **Summary of academic and applied contributions**

Based on the presented work, the following significant contributions can be identified:

- 1. Theoretical systematisation:** For the first time in Bulgarian musicology, a comprehensive overview of the evolution of saxophone art in China is presented, covering a century of development with a focus on the last 20 years.
- 2. Definition of the integration model:** The mechanism by which a Western instrument adapts to a non-Western musical system has been successfully identified, transitioning from a phase of Westernisation to organic hybridisation.
- 3. Methodological innovation:** Development of pedagogical approaches that combine acoustic precision, technical mastery, and emotional intelligence.
- 4. Acoustic contribution:** The study offers a scientific perspective on the sonic and performance capabilities of the saxophone when performing traditional Eastern music.
- 5. Practical Application:** Wang Jiabin's personal creative achievements (concerts, awards in Bulgaria and China) serve as indisputable proof of the validity of the proposed theses.

### **Critical notes and recommendations**

1. Despite the high value of this work, I would recommend that in future research, the author further explore the parallels between the Bulgarian and Chinese methodological schools, as his experience

at NBU gives him a unique position for such a comparative analysis. 2. The bibliography could be supplemented with more sources in the field of music psychology.

### **Conclusion**

Wang Jiaxin's dissertation is a rigorous, well-structured, and innovative study. Evidently, the work under scrutiny herein demonstrates a high level of theoretical expertise, thus serving as irrefutable evidence of a successful collaboration between different cultural and educational systems. It is evident that the thesis adheres to the ZRASRB's stipulated criteria, thereby fulfilling all necessary requirements.

**I propose that the esteemed academic jury award Wan Jiaxin the academic and scientific degree of “Doctor” in the field of Musicology and Musical Arts.**

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** April 12, 2026, Assoc. Prof. Dr Hristo Karagyozov