

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Music and Politics: How Musicians and Their Music Become a Factor in Political Discourse
Author of the thesis:	Liangliang Ma
Referee (<i>incl. titles</i>):	Doc. Ing. Vladimír Benáček, CSc.

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the five numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

The author, Miss Ma, came with a quite original theoretical underpinning for explaining the relationship between music and politics: a) By using the theory of collective action which is used mainly in economics (for explaining the objectives of efficiency and minimization of transaction costs); b) By using the theory of public goods and externalities; c) By extending the meaning of politics with its relationship to money (economics), power over society and rational behaviour, which is used in sociology. In her interpretation music thus became an instrument of human communication for achieving, explicitly or implicitly, most varied human aims of cooperation. This was very skilfully used in approximately the first half of the text. In the second half the impact of the theory on her analysis somehow eased off.

2) Contribution:

First of all I would like to stress that the thesis covers quite an unorthodox field in politics since music is conceived primarily as a non-political piece of highly abstract artistic creativity full of emotions and experiments with the sound. Politics thus comes to the music indirectly: through the intended artistic metaphors of the author, through the rendition of the interpreters and through the imagination of the consumers of art. This is a very difficult task to describe in a political academic writing and I share sympathy with the author that her brave resolve to tackle this academic treat was not easy to achieve. Being a person from the Chinese cultural background there were two additional problems to overcome: in the usage of English for describing complicated abstract thoughts and in absorbing the European-American cultural dominance in the interpretation of music. To a large extent Miss Ma succeeded in that task, though in some sections her descriptions were not easy to figure out and I, as a reader, had to use my own imagination quite often in the second half of the thesis. Nevertheless, Miss Ma came with many original ideas in interpreting the art (music) from the point of view of politics, adding so new views to the interpretation of music.

3) Methods:

The academic deliberations of the author have been often guarded by using logic and the assessment of rational behaviour in aiming at human collective action and cooperation, which was the case mainly in the first 20 pages of the thesis. Later on this abstract thinking was relaxed, being replaced by the empirical evidence, case studies and narratives. This approach can be considered as appropriate to the topic of the study.

4) Literature:

Miss Ma was constrained by a rather thin list of world literature which was dedicated to her topic. She had to experiment a lot, becoming so quite original by drawing from the economic literature and applying it to a very unusual object of human creativity – the music. I must admit that I as a non-musicologist cannot claim that the author used all available literature assessing music as an art related to politics. I presume that Miss Ma did her very best to acquire the most relevant sources. The list of literature is sufficiently extensive and relevant.

5) Manuscript form:

This aspect of the thesis was the most controversial. I was enthused by the first twelve pages (i.e. from the first two chapters). In my later reading I had often an impression that the author lacked some additional one to two weeks of work for sustaining the formal standards of the thesis on the original level. From the third chapter on, some of the sentences lack clarity of an English syntax, which (most probably, I guess) is caused by retaining the traces of Chinese syntax. There are often missing the verbs derived from “to be” or the proverb “that”, corrupting so the contextual connectivity in sentences. It is a great pity that Miss Ma could not sustain the readability of her thesis on the level of the first 12 pages.

Box for the thesis supervisor only. Please characterize the progress in the working out of thesis (e.g., steady and gradual versus discontinuous and abrupt) and the level (intensity) of communication/cooperation with the author:

I had a very intensive communication with the author. Miss Ma was exceptionally committed to the thesis and consulted her ideas and the progress in the thesis in regular intervals. I appreciate her endeavour to build the argument practically from a scratch and build it just from her fancy for the music. I confirm that she made a tremendous progress, hopefully for her own enjoyment of music.

Suggested questions for the defence are:

Please explain your major own and original contribution of the thesis which rests in the three-pronged context of politics in music: through the intended artistic metaphors of the author, through the rendition of the interpreters and through the imagination of the consumers of art. Said by another words: explain how politics can be present in the music.

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20 points)</i>	19
<i>Contribution (max. 20 points)</i>	18
<i>Methods (max. 20 points)</i>	16
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	17
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20 points)</i>	9
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	79
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	C or even B if the defence is successful.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 20.8.2018

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honour)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honour)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.

The referee should give comments to the following requirements:

1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant to this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts **omitted**? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently **incorporated with the topic** and hypotheses tested? Has the author demonstrated a genuine **understanding** of the theories addressed?

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and the ability to draw **conclusions** based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the **policy implications** well founded?

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

3) METHODS: Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further **verification and testing**? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or **irrelevant detours** off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 12 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**).

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates the author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author **quotes** relevant literature in a **proper way** and works with a **representative bibliography**. (Remarks: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**. If they dominate, you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give a much better impression. Any sort of **plagiarism** disqualifies the thesis from admission to defence.)

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate **language and style**, including the academic **format for quotations**, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**. The text is free from typos and easy to comprehend.

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

Remarks for the referees:

- 1) Download the thesis from the SIS. If you have no access to SIS, please ask the secretary of IPS (jana.krejcikova@fsv.cuni.cz, tel. 251 080 214) for sending you the thesis by e-mail.
- 2) Use the IEPS Thesis Report form only for your comments. **It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 400 words.** In case you assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.
- 3) Retain your critical stance. You cannot confer more than 80 points upon a thesis that does not satisfy research standards in top European universities.
- 4) Upload the Report as PDF/A file into the SIS. Instructions on how to convert .DOCx to PDF/A): „Save as“ – select „PDF“ – check-in „Options or Možnosti“ that „PDF options“ tick „ISO 19005-1 compliant /kompatibilní s/ (PDF/A)“ – „Save“. If you have no access to SIS, please send the unsigned PDF file to the secretary of IPS (jana.krejcikova@fsv.cuni.cz).
- 5) Please deliver to the IPS Secretariat, U Kříže 8, 15800 Praha 5 Jinonice, **two hand-signed originals**. Unfortunately, a photocopied report with signature does not suffice. Sorry.
- 6) Your Report will be remunerated, so we need also your account information (separate from this form).