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**The Concept of Chinese and Western Vocal Music
Integration in the Context of Performative Expression and
Techniques on Selected Works**

**Description of the artistic doctoral dissertation as part of the
procedure for awarding the doctoral degree in the field of arts, in the
artistic discipline: musical arts**

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Content

Abstract.....	3
Part I Explication of the Integration of Chinese and Western Vocal Music.....	5
Chapter 1: The Concept and Diversified Characteristics of the Integration of Chinese and Western Vocal Music.....	6
1.1 The Vocal Music Art of “Integration of Chinese and Western” under the Background of Sino-Western Exchange.....	6
1.2 Diversified singing perspectives of Chinese art songs: nationality, artistry, and polyphony.....	10
Chapter 2: Training and Application of Bel Canto in the West.....	25
2.1 Bel Canto’s Vocal Skills and Training.....	25
2.2 Application and Analysis of Vocal Techniques.....	35
Part II The performative expression and utilization of singing techniques in Chinese and Western vocal music works.....	41
Chapter 3: My Insights and Application of the Integration of Chinese and Western Vocal Music.....	42
3.1 The Utilization of Five Essential Elements in the Performative Expression of Chinese and Western Vocal Music Fusion Concept in Works-Sound, Emotion, Language, Performance, Aesthetics.....	42
3.2 Technical Application of Singing Chinese Songs with the Concept of Integrating Chinese and Western Vocal Music.....	51
Chapter 4: Performance Expression and Technical Application in Western Vocal Music Works.....	59
4.1 Analysis and Application of Singing Western Art Songs.....	59
4.2 Singing Analysis and Application of Opera Aria.....	76
Chapter 5: Performance Expression and Technical Application of Chinese Art Songs.....	86
5.1 Analysis and Application of Singing Chinese Ancient Songs.....	86
5.2 The Analysis and Application of Chinese Modern Art Songs.....	92
5.3 Analysis and Utilization of Chinese Contemporary Art Songs.....	98
Conclusion.....	113

Abstract

Keywords: Chinese and Western vocal music integration; singing techniques; performative expression; Bel Canto; five elements

With the evolution of time and societal advancements, the diverse music culture has accelerated the exchange between Chinese and Western music, notably evident in the influence of Western vocal music art on Chinese vocal music art. By incorporating the singing skills of Western bel canto in a more scientific manner into the rendition of Chinese vocal music works, we strive to make Chinese songs more internationally appealing while retaining their national character, a cherished aspiration among vocal music practitioners.

This paper, grounded in the concept of integrating Chinese and Western vocal music, delves into the analysis of singing skills and musical performance in Chinese and foreign vocal music works. The thesis comprises five chapters, structured into two parts. The first part encompasses two chapters. The first chapter explores the current landscape of Chinese and Western vocal music integration, emphasizing the analysis of singing and musical expression in Chinese art songs from the perspectives of nationality, artistry, and polyphony. The second chapter offers an application analysis of Bel Canto in the West, encompassing skill training and the analysis and application of works across different vocal genres. This represents not only the essence of Western vocal music skills but also the cornerstone of Western vocal music philosophy. The second part delves into the analysis of performative expression and technical utilization in Chinese and Western vocal music works, drawing from the author's practical experience in integrating these two musical traditions. The third chapter showcases my insights into the integration of Chinese and Western vocal music, emphasizing two pivotal points: Firstly, the five elements employed in the performing expression of works under the integration of Chinese and Western vocal music concepts—sound, emotion, language, performance, and aesthetics; secondly, the application of singing techniques that integrate Chinese and Western vocal music approaches in the rendition of Chinese songs. The fourth chapter presents the performance expression and technical analysis of Western vocal music works, comprising analyses of Western art songs and opera arias. The fifth chapter, meanwhile, focuses on the performing expression and technical analysis of Chinese art songs, covering three distinct eras: ancient, modern, and contemporary Chinese art songs,

offering detailed analyses of the works provided in the recorded CDs.

Part I

Explication of the Integration of Chinese and Western Vocal Music

Chapter 1: The Concept and Diversified Characteristics of the Integration of Chinese and Western Vocal Music

1.1 The Vocal Music Art of “Integration of Chinese and Western” under the Background of Sino-Western Exchange

Vocal music art, in terms of its aesthetic practice, art education, as well as its dissemination and exchange, has profoundly influenced people’s cultural life through its unique artistic style and diverse forms of expression. With the continuous development of society and the continuous progress of human civilization, vocal music art is also constantly exploring and evolving within the framework of inheritance and innovation.

“School Songs” in modern China are the result of the collision between Chinese and Western cultures. The emergence and development of these songs in the early 20th century marked the beginning of the comprehensive development of Chinese music from tradition to diversification. The creation of “School Songs” largely drew upon the melodies of school, folk, and children’s songs from Japan, Europe, and the United States, thereby gradually introducing Western musical knowledge to the Chinese people. Concurrently, the “singing class” introduced in schools across the country pioneered modern vocal music education in China. “School Songs” embody the integration and diversity of Eastern and Western cultures, both in terms of creation and performance theory, and are of great significance in promoting the advancement of China’s early national vocal music art and culture. Subsequently, the introduction of Western vocal music, particularly Italian bel canto, revolutionized the training of traditional Chinese vocal music talents, sparked changes in Chinese vocal music teaching and artistic practice, and had a profound impact on the inheritance and development of Chinese vocal music art culture.

In the 1930s, a group of singers, including Wang Kun and Guo Lanying, scientifically and dialectically integrated traditional opera and folk song singing in their long-term artistic practice of singing and performance, thereby creating a new, distinctive national opera singing style that fused opera and folk song. With the creation and successful performance of the new opera “The White-haired Girl”, Chinese national vocal music art gradually matured. In 1927, the establishment of the Shanghai National Conservatory of Music marked a new era of professional music education in China. Musicians such as Huang Zi, Qingzhu, and Zhao Yuanren employed Western harmony

and composition techniques to produce a large number of artistic songs imbued with national flavor. Many students who had studied vocal music abroad returned subsequently. They not only organized solo concerts in major cities like Shanghai, but also performed a wide range of foreign songs, Chinese folk songs, and artistic songs composed by Chinese composers, utilizing Western singing techniques and showcasing the brilliance of Western vocal music art on China's vocal music stage. Furthermore, more vocal musicians embarked on professional vocal music education, including Zhou Shu'an, Ying Shangneng, and Zhao Meibo, who applied the scientific theories of Western singing while incorporating China's traditional music culture. They nurtured a generation of singers and vocal music educators, making an indelible contribution to China's vocal music education. In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the vocal music community initiated a debate over the two singing methods of nationality and *bel canto* – “the dispute between advocates of native style and advocates of Western style.” The former believed that Chinese national vocal music was the quintessence of the nation and should be protected from the influence and potential disruption of Western vocal music, while the latter held that Western singing was the sole scientific method, capable of injecting infinite vitality into Chinese vocal music. This apparent confrontation of differing concepts is, in essence, an exploration into the development path of Chinese vocal music art. Practical experience has shown that the ultimate outcome of the “dispute between advocates of native style and advocates of Western style” has facilitated the 'integration of native and foreign elements' in opera, folk songs, and Western singing techniques. In the 1980s, pop music, which originated in Europe and the United States, was introduced into China and flourished. Popular singing methods have evolved from humming in the streets and alleys to taking the stage of the Golden Bell Award, China's most prestigious professional vocal music award, in recent years. Popular singing has gradually ascended to the mainstream vocal music stage in China and seems to have a broader audience base. In recent years, in an effort to preserve Chinese traditional folk music, Chinese musicians have brought “authentic” performances from the countryside to the stage, evoking people's profound longing for the authenticity and purity of traditional folk music culture, as well as introspection on the revival of this culture. To date, after decades of learning and development, contemporary Chinese vocal music art has evolved into a diverse range of singing styles, represented by *bel canto*, folk, pop, and

original styles. Concurrently, the integration and synthesis of various styles are quietly taking shape. Thanks to the relentless efforts of several generations of outstanding singers and vocal music educators, China's vocal music art has achieved remarkable accomplishments both domestically and on the global vocal music stage.¹

With the rapid development of China's economy, the singing art of "integration of Chinese and Western" produced under the multicultural background presents a thriving cultural landscape with diverse expressions and vibrant debates. The economic opening has provided a platform for global cultural exchanges, while the diversification of economic development has made cultural innovation and integration inevitable. Against this backdrop, vocal music art, as an artistic form of culture, continues to thrive through the exploration and practice of integrating diverse singing methods and styles, embracing diversity and mutual learning. It is noteworthy that in recent years, many singers, driven by the trend of advancing with the times and in their relentless pursuit of artistic innovation, have endeavored to challenge long-standing limitations in singing classifications. By integrating various singing styles such as bel canto, national, pop, and even opera, they have taken the best and discarded the rest, optimizing the combination to create a diversified singing style that aligns with the increasingly complex value orientations and aesthetic standards of modern people. In recent years, numerous singers have made significant contributions to the exchange and integration of vocal music in China. Within the country, singers like Peng Liyuan and Song Zuying have continuously drawn from the essence of Chinese folk songs and operas, combined with the vocal skills of bel canto, to create a more resonant, bright, and penetrating timbre, and clearer, mellower pronunciation. They have presented an aesthetic and artistically appealing singing style, propelling Chinese national vocal music into a new era. On the international stage of vocal music competitions, singers from China have conquered the world music scene with their skilled bel canto techniques and unique national temperament, winning numerous awards. After winning an international award in the 1980s, the renowned singer Dilibaier has been actively performing on opera stages abroad for many years, portraying numerous iconic operatic characters. Additionally, she sings Xinjiang folk songs in both Uyghur and Chinese, effectively spreading Chinese

¹ Liang Xue's *Chinese and Western Combination of Vocal Music* Changchun Jilin Publishing Group Co., Ltd., July 2016, Page 2

national culture and earning herself the accolade of the “Oriental Nightingale” both domestically and internationally. Notably, the young singer Wu Bixia stands out for her versatile and integrated singing style, which encompasses bel canto, ethnic music, and even pop music, earning her the title of a “fusion artist” who bridges Chinese and Western music. Furthermore, an increasing number of singers are choosing to study abroad, while numerous internationally renowned singers and vocal music educators are invited to China to deliver lectures and hold “masterclasses,” enabling domestic vocal music professionals, students, and teachers to gain hands-on experience with and learn from the world’s advanced vocal music culture without leaving the country. Chinese singers have even taken their solo concerts to world-renowned music halls, showcasing the charm and promising future of Chinese vocal music art to the world. This has led to an unprecedented boom in global exchanges in vocal music art. The renowned vocal music educator Jin Tielin has developed a unique teaching method that combines Western bel canto with the essence of Chinese national singing, creating the distinct “Jin-style singing.” This approach has nurtured countless outstanding national vocal music talents, ushering in a new era for Chinese national singing. As for bel canto, the seminal vocal music educator Zhou Xiaoyan studied vocal music in France early in her career. Upon returning to China, she dedicated herself to both performing and educating, cultivating a plethora of exceptional vocal music talents and making outstanding contributions to China’s vocal music education. Many of her students, who have won prestigious awards both domestically and internationally, continue to thrive on stages and in teaching, diligently contributing to the exchange and development of Chinese and Western vocal music. For example, Liao Changyong, a renowned baritone singer and the dean of Shanghai Conservatory of Music, has been steadfast in promoting the exchange and inheritance of Chinese and Western vocal music art in recent years, with the ambition of disseminating China’s outstanding songs globally. He has held numerous concerts both domestically and internationally, and secured numerous top prizes globally. His rendition of Chinese songs was exceptionally clear and natural, imbued with traditional Chinese characteristics. In recent years, he has led students and numerous accomplished singers in promoting Chinese art songs, bringing these gems of Chinese music to foreign shores. Concurrently, a comprehensive collection of books celebrating a century of Chinese art songs was published for posterity. Notably, Shi Yijie, a young tenor born in the 1980s, enjoys immense popularity among China’s vocal music

enthusiasts. Apart from performing diverse roles both domestically and internationally, he has garnered numerous accolades and holds a prominent position in China's education sector. In recent years, Shi Yijie has also made significant contributions to the cultural exchange of Chinese vocal music. Today's Chinese vocal music enthusiasts admire him deeply because his renditions of Chinese art songs are exceptionally natural and captivating, blending Western artistic flair with pronunciation that seamlessly aligns with Chinese linguistic rhythms. The manner in which he achieves such perfection in his interpretation of Chinese art songs is worthy of extensive study by vocal music enthusiasts and aspirants alike, and it is precisely this aspect that intrigues the author most. The purpose of this paper stems from the author's admiration and pursuit of Shi Yijie's vocal artistry.

In the 21st century, the proliferation of modern mass media technology has offered faster, freer, and more personalized choices in aesthetic objects. The diverse, cross-border singing styles that integrate Chinese and Western elements are rich in distinct personality, aligning with the trends of the times and catering to the public's aesthetic demands. They provide the audience with a diverse aesthetic experience while also allowing singers to fully showcase their artistic talents, enriching the vocal music art scene in China. This underscores the new demands of the era on vocal singing techniques and embodies the spirit of our vocalists in adapting to the times, keeping pace with progress, constantly innovating, and their sense of responsibility and unwavering pursuit in the development of art.

1.2 Diversified singing perspectives of Chinese art songs: nationality, artistry, and polyphony

1.2.1 The national singing perspective of Chinese art songs

1.2.1.1 Integration of Chinese and Western singing methods and concepts

Singing method refers to the approach employed in the act of singing. Chinese vocal music should be sung using scientific vocal techniques. Based on this, the author believes that *bel canto* is not the sole approach to singing Chinese songs. The integration of Chinese and Western singing methods can be described as a harmonious blend of both traditions. After a comprehensive and multi-faceted analysis of the singing methods of Chinese art songs over the past century, the author posits that the singing methods adopted

by Chinese art songs are based on the concept of “Chinese singing,” rooted in nationality.

1. Interpretation of “Chinese Singing”

“Chinese singing” emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, following the introduction of Western bel canto. It not only promoted the development of vocal music singing art but also contributed to the integration of Chinese language and Western singing techniques. The aesthetic impact of “Chinese singing” has captured the attention and sparked discussions within the vocal music and broader musical communities. In December 1949, the academic community also presented a document titled “New China Singing Outline,” prepared by the “Communication Department of Music Issues” jointly organized by the Chinese Music Association and the Central Conservatory of Music, entitled “Research Reference Outline on ‘Singing Problems’.” The Central Conservatory of Music also convened a symposium to discuss the issue of singing, which sparked a debate on the merits of indigenous versus foreign singing techniques within the musical community at the dawn of the People’s Republic of China.²

2. The Concept of Singing Fusion Rooted in Nationality

The singing method of Chinese art songs should integrate bel canto with national singing techniques to embody the innovative approach of “Chinese Singing”. Explore the advantages of blending bel canto with national singing techniques, so that it remains distinct from both the original folk songs, folk art, and opera singing, as well as from traditional Western bel canto.

Tracing back to their origins, while national singing and bel canto emerged in different countries, each imbued with unique national characteristics, they have both undergone a lengthy historical development. Shaped by diverse social, historical, and cultural contexts, they have gradually evolved into renowned, widely disseminated, and distinctive singing styles and techniques. Hence, the performance of Chinese art songs necessitates not only attending to both the evolution and refinement of national artistic forms but also identifying shared principles in singing methods based on the content of the works, fostering integration, mutual learning, and joint development.

From the perspective of developmental trajectories, bel canto and national singing share

² Cheng Lu. "On Chinese Singing" [J]. Journal of Xinghai Conservatory of Music, 1996(04):51.

similar histories. Bel canto originated from Western opera, whereas Chinese national singing stems from traditional Chinese dramas, such as Peking Opera, Kunqu Opera, and Zaju. Both singing styles are deeply rooted in traditional drama and opera, catering to the stylistic demands of the works and the aesthetic preferences of the nation. In the quest for and development of singing methods for Chinese art songs, “Chinese singing” harmoniously aligns with the aesthetic core of this genre. It emphasizes the embellishment of national language, adheres to the aesthetic standards of national vocal music, and highlights the unique essence of national art, ultimately forming a national singing style that embodies both form and spirit, featuring clear pronunciation and rounded tone. Taking the renowned singer Wu Bixia as an example, she masterfully integrated the essence of both Chinese and Western vocal singing techniques, establishing a standard paradigm for “Chinese singing”. Wu Bixia has emerged victorious in numerous international vocal competitions, her distinctive blend of Chinese national singing and Western bel canto setting her apart and achieving an eclectic effect.

Therefore, in the application of singing methods for Chinese art songs, bel canto and national singing styles can coexist depending on the content of the works. However, the singing method serves the music style, and language is a crucial factor in shaping this style. The choice of singing method should adhere to the use of national language and national aesthetic standards. As Zhou Xiaoyan stated when discussing the construction of the Chinese national school, “It differs from original folk songs, traditional performing arts, and opera singing, and also from the general sense of bel canto. It is a new singing system that has been comprehensively developed through in-depth study, learning, and absorption of the advantages of various singing methods—China’s new music art.”³ Furthermore, Zhou Xiaoyan elaborated on the essence of vocal music: “It does not sound foreign to Chinese listeners, yet retains an exotic flavor for foreigners. It is modern, Chinese, scientific, and can stand among the world’s vocal music as a new vocal art.”³ What Zhou Xiaoyan refers to is our modern bel canto singing method, which embodies national thinking and contributes to the construction of the “Chinese singing method” within the Chinese national music school.

³ Zhou Xiaoyan. The Development Track of Chinese Vocal Music Art [J]. Music Art · Journal of Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 1992 (02): 4

In summary, the integration of Chinese and Western singing methods should aim for innovation, unconstrained by any specific singing method. It represents the development of national art thinking. The author believes that this singing method is a “national” singing method.

1.2.1.2 The Fusion of Chinese and Western Singing Styles

Style embodies the uniqueness of art works in the unity of its content and form. Singing style represents not only the stable and continuous aesthetic characteristics displayed by the singer in interpreting works, but also embodies the unique characteristics exhibited by the singer in the process of realizing the content of vocal music works through singing behavior. As a hallmark of singing art, the singing style directly presents the content and form of art songs, integrating national spirit and national culture. In today's pursuit of singing style diversification, adhering to a singular or simplistic approach increasingly reveals a lack of stylistic richness and depth. When examining Chinese art songs from a nationalistic perspective, emphasis should be placed on highlighting their national character. Therefore, considering the diversified characteristics of national singing styles as the primary factor in shaping Chinese art song singing styles, we can facilitate the development of such styles.

1.Regional culture serves as the foundation for the development of national singing styles.

Different nationalities residing in diverse regions possess unique cultural backdrops, which inevitably lead to variations in their artistic expressions, thereby embodying national differences. The creation of Chinese art songs inherently bears distinct national characteristics. Consequently, singing art songs that embody national features inevitably showcases a national singing style. We commonly refer to this traditional and multifaceted national singing style as the distinctive national artistic style of Chinese art songs. For instance, the art song “Gada Meilin”, arranged by composer Sang Tong, is influenced by Mongolia’s profound cultural heritage, portraying a majestic image of the grasslands. This work falls under the category of long-tune songs, representing the pinnacle of grassland music culture and has traditionally been regarded as the quintessential symbol of Mongolian national style. When performing this work, bass singer Peng Kangliang emphasizes the lyricism and

soothing rhythm inherent in the Mongolian long-tone timbre, thereby fostering a Chinese art song singing style imbued with Mongolian characteristics.

Furthermore, the art song “A Glass of Wine”, with lyrics by Aike Baier and music by Dai Hongwei, exudes a rich Xinjiang Uygur style. The unique rhythm of the Western Region folk song fully showcases the artistic allure of the region’s music, revealing the enthusiastic and unrestrained personality traits of the Xinjiang Uygur people. Dilbair's rendition of “A Glass of Wine” places great emphasis on the regional linguistic nuances of Xinjiang, emphasizing the song’s intricate melodies that alternate between subtle nuances and soaring heights, fostering an atmosphere of overflowing emotion within its melodious tones. This performance offers the audience a concise, lively, warm, straightforward, and lyrically profound auditory experience, while Dilbair meticulously interprets the song's defining parabolic melody, elevating the artistic realm of the song while preserving its original musical essence, and fully showcasing its ethnic charm.

2.The national singing style serves as a cultural hallmark of its era.

The emergence of any singing style reflects the cultural interpretation and profound national sentiment of its time. Different eras have nurtured distinct national singing styles.

(1) The national style fueled by passion

As early as the early days of the Anti-Japanese War, the main form of propaganda for the development of vocal music in China was anti-Japanese songs. Although there was no rigorous definition of the genre of art songs at that time, a plethora of anti-Japanese and national salvation songs, such as “Singing Girl Downtrodden”, “On Jialing River”, and “Along the Sungari River”, significantly resonated with the general public emotionally. This passionate national style profoundly embodies the national essence of Chinese art songs.

For example, He Luting’s “On Jialing River” is an art song that encourages the Chinese people to fight against the war. With its unique song style, profound historical significance, and strong patriotic feelings, it exudes immense appeal and inspires the Chinese people’s revolutionary spirit. Both songwriters, He Luting and Duanmu Hongliang, had experienced the Anti-Japanese War and yearned for its victory. They were full of revolutionary passion when creating this song. The song’s rendition, with

its sonorous momentum and fighting spirit, conveys the author's anti-Japanese confidence and ignites the people's spirit of resistance against aggression.

(2) The Fusion Style at the Intersection of Chinese and Western Elements

The renowned sopranos Wu Bixia, Shi Yijie, and Chang Sisi stand as exemplars of integrating Chinese and Western vocal techniques in the rendition of Chinese art songs.

Wu Bixia, the lyrical coloratura soprano acclaimed as the “Nightingale of Chinese and Western Harmony,” possesses a mastery over both the styles of Chinese national vocal music and foreign vocal repertoire. She serves as a pivotal figure in the exploration of blending Chinese national vocal music singing techniques. Her signature works in Chinese art songs, such as “Moonlit River In Spring Capriccio,” “Song of the Burial of Flowers,” and “Changxiangzhi,” seamlessly integrate traditional Chinese folk singing techniques with the bel canto lyricism and coloratura nuances, vividly showcasing the charm of Chinese national art songs in the contemporary era.

Shi Yijie, a renowned young tenor singer in China, is highly acclaimed for his performances of Chinese art songs and newly composed Chinese songs, including “Homesickness,” “The Yue Folk’s Song,” “You Are My Eyes,” and “Three Wishes for a Rose.” These works have garnered immense popularity among vocal music enthusiasts and learners alike, positioning him as a shining example of the harmonious fusion between Chinese and Western vocal music. In an interview, he revealed that he had discovered the essence of this fusion by integrating the singing principles of German and Chinese languages.

Chang Sisi, a celebrated young coloratura soprano in China, emerged victorious in the 6th Chinese Music Golden Bell Awards for National Singing. Her iconic performances of “Spring Ballet,” “Juliet Petrus,” “Concerto Pour Deux Voix,” and other innovative Chinese coloratura works seamlessly blend Western coloratura singing techniques with traditional Chinese singing styles, forging a classic masterpiece that embodies the spirit of Sino-Western integration in the new era.

In conclusion, Chinese art songs, having evolved over a century, have steadfastly upheld their national roots while embracing integration for growth. Chinese art song composers continually delve into exploring singing styles that resonate with national identity, incorporating elements from folk songs, ancient poetry, and pop music within, and seamlessly fusing with Western art songs without, thereby crafting Chinese art

songs imbued with distinctive national characteristics. Chinese singers, through relentless exploration and refinement of the Chinese singing style, have showcased a vocal artistry that is uniquely Chinese and deeply rooted in its cultural heritage.

1.2.2 Artistic Singing Perspective of Chinese Art Songs

The presentation of artistry in Chinese art song singing is the process of mental elaboration and operation of artistry within this genre. Firstly, it involves the artistic conception of the work's "imagery". The singer constructs the outline of the artistic image through their own perception of the work. Secondly, it encompasses the artistic interpretation of the work's "deep meaning". This process necessitates the singer's meticulous analysis of the work's significance and the selection of an appropriate singing method, ensuring that the singing techniques and the work's inner meaning complement each other. Lastly, it concerns the artistic expression of the work's "artistic conception". In the process of singing, the singer engages in rational contemplation of the work's artistic elements and evaluates them against aesthetic criteria. This mode of thinking represents a logical progression, grounded in interpretive and selective thinking, that shapes the singer's approach to the work. Undeniably, during the process of the singer's second creative interpretation, their understanding of life and the depth of their emotional cognition play a pivotal role in the ultimate realization of the work.

1.2.2.1 The Artistic Conception of the "Image" in the Work

Artistic conception, a creative thinking process, serves a particular purpose in the realm of Chinese art song singing. Guided by artistic conception, the artist shapes the artistic image while selecting the creative object and method, thereby establishing the conceptual framework for the singing style of the work.

In the singing of Chinese art songs, imagery exhibits four key characteristics: psychological imagery, technical generalization, artistic expression, and linguistic nuances. The image-based thinking in Chinese art song singing represents an externalization of the artist's internal creative vision and emotions. Imagery, in the context of Chinese art song singing, refers to the mental constructs that embody the artist's intentions and emotions. It signifies the maturity of art songs and embodies an unstoppable impulse towards artistic expression. In the creation process of the lyricists,

a single image serves as the fundamental unit of image-based thinking. The singer then expands this single image into a complex combination of multiple images through the process of artistic conception.

The Chinese art song “How Could I Not Think of Her,” penned by Zhao Yuanren in 1926 with lyrics by Liu Bannong, stands as his most representative work. This song embodies the author’s profound emotional imagery, where the word “she” carries rich and varied connotations, symbolizing not just a person missed deeply but also the broader scope of one’s homeland and aspirations. The author expands this singular image of “she” to encompass all beloved figures and objects. The song also presents a profound and expansive real-life imagery, celebrating the youth of the May Fourth Movement who dared to break free from feudal constraints and pursued pure and unfettered love. Zhao Yuanren’s exquisite musical composition masterfully enhances the emotional depth of the lyrics, transforming it into an artistic song replete with emotion.

Moreover, “How Could I Not Think of Her” is a lyrical masterpiece. The lyrics evolve from four distinct images into four distinct musical sections, each capturing poetic scenes from the four seasons: the gentle clouds and breeze of spring, the moonlight and vast ocean of summer, the falling flowers and darting fish of autumn, and the withered trees and wildfires of winter. Through the symmetry and rhyming characteristic of Chinese poetry, these scenes convey the author’s intense feelings of longing and affection. From a holistic perspective, the imagery in this work serves as an aesthetic lens, a spiritual creation that originates from and ultimately returns to the essence of art. A deeper interpretation reveals it as a vast and creative space imbued with the vitality and spirit of the work itself.

The artistic conception of Chinese ancient poetry art songs ought to adhere to the “beauty of sound and rhyme, and the charm of meaning and sentiment” emphasized in ancient Chinese vocal music art. The key to a successful performance lies in the singer’s ability to conceive a natural “artistic charm.” Across various sectors, there is a consensus that the lyrics of Chinese art songs must embody poetic language. This poetic language falls within the realm of literature, with “emotion” at its core. To express the full range of human thoughts and feelings through the singing of Chinese art songs, the singer must accurately discern the work’s⁴ internal structure and the

⁴ Zhou Xiaoyan. The Development Track of Chinese Vocal Music Art [J]. Music Art · Journal of Shanghai

artistic approach to singing. This requires thoughtful contemplation and daring innovation from the singer.

1.2.2.2 Artistic Interpretation of the “Implication” in a Work

As an internal element corresponding to the external factors of art works, implication transcends the form, embodying the inner emotion and soul of the artwork. It can also be regarded as the essence and character of the artistic creation. Artistic interpretation pertains to the depth attained by works of art in conveying their meanings as they vividly reflect life and content. This encompasses the accuracy and vividness of the artistic image, the integrity and meticulousness of the structural framework, the diversity and innovation of the artistic techniques employed, as well as the national character and contemporary relevance of the artistic style.

In the artistic interpretation of the “implication” in Chinese art songs, it is crucial to acknowledge that this implication does not merely encompass the content and theme of the work, but rather, the profound spirit and sentiments embedded within. Consequently, the artistic interpretation of the “implication” in the rendition of Chinese art songs necessitates that the singer delves deeply into the inner thoughts of the work, utilizing artistic techniques to convey the depths of meaning that can only be perceived through introspective observation. Given the constraints in artistic processing with regards to perception and expression, both the creation and performance of art songs require drawing inspiration from multifaceted knowledge fields. By expanding artistic thinking through multiple perspectives and designing the performance with a high-level perspective, we can integrate interdisciplinary knowledge and accurately grasp the singing direction of Chinese art songs.

“My Deep Feelings Are Waiting for You” is a masterpiece of Chinese art songs that has frequently emerged in art song competitions in recent years. This work has garnered widespread audience admiration for its profound meaning and rich emotional undertones. When performed, it showcases a soft, muted, and lustrous timbre that eloquently conveys its deep sentiments. In the rendition of the lines “Your love lies in my chest, each dream so gentle, through the years of trials and tribulations, you forever reside in my heart,” the singer employs a continuous, implicit, and seamless flow of emotion, singing from the depths of their heart to express the work’s inherent feelings.

This progression of emotions, narrated softly yet powerfully, showcases the profound essence of the work.

1.2.2.3 Artistic Expression of the “Artistic Conception” in the Work

Artistic conception represents the artistic realm where the depiction of Chinese art songs merges seamlessly with the performance of singing. In the creation of Chinese art songs, the composer directly portrays natural scenery and societal elements, using the work as a vehicle to express emotions and subjective thoughts, thereby falling under the broader category. However, the singing artistic conception of Chinese art songs specifically falls within the narrower scope, where singing is utilized to convey the subjective emotions and thoughts embodied within the lyrics and the visual imagery of natural scenery depicted in the existing art songs. “Yi” (meaning) encompasses feelings and thoughts, while “Jing” (conception) represents objects and images. It is when “Yi” is embodied within “Jing,” and vice versa, that the artistic presentation of Chinese art song singing is achieved. The author contends that the artistic conception in Chinese art song singing constitutes a unique “realm,” arising from the intermingling of the singer’s subjective emotions and the objectively depicted scenery. Notably, in the singing of ancient Chinese art songs, artistic conception stands as a pivotal aesthetic category and an artistic standard that embodies national characteristics.

Mr. Huang Zi composed the artistically significant art song “Flowers Are Not Flowers”, which primarily serves as a vocal music textbook yet boasts exceptional artistic merit. First published in September 1933, the lyrics are drawn from a mixed-verse poem by the Tang Dynasty poet Bai Juyi. Despite being a concise 10-bar song, the piano accompaniment, both left and right hands, intricately intertwines with the vocal melody, creating a unique harmony where the three voices converge seamlessly in parallel. Conventionally, such a compositional approach is discouraged in musical theory, yet when paired with Bai Juyi’s poetic imagery of “Flowers Are Not Flowers; mist, not mist, arriving at midnight, departing at dawn...”, it evokes a captivating ambience. Through Liao Changyong's rendition, I perceived the song's simplicity, profoundness, and elegant artistic standards. In soprano Wu Bixia's performance, I appreciated how she masterfully integrated Huang Zi’s Western musical

vocabulary into traditional Chinese elements, creating a profound artistic experience. This demonstrates that the artistic conception of Chinese art song singing stems not only from the essence of the artistic image but also reflects the singer's artistic mindset, which is both a specific portrayal of the artistic image and a fundamental characteristic of Chinese art song singing.

In conclusion, art songs originate from life, and the artistic mindset behind their singing is a direct reflection of that life. Singers immerse themselves in the imagery to grasp the inherent essence of the work; they delve into the soul of the piece to interpret its artistic implications; and through the harmonious blend of the real and the abstract, they express the “meaning” within the “art” of the work. It is testament to the fact that regardless of how vibrant and diverse the artistry of art songs may appear, they ultimately mirror the singers’ life experiences and perspectives.

1.2.3 The Multi-Voice Singing Perspective of Chinese Art Songs

1.2.3.1 The Presentation of Polyphony in Singing Timbre

The timbre of singing can be categorized into soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass, based on the range of the voice. Different genders and ranges naturally lead to distinct timbres. In vocal art, voices are further divided meticulously according to timbre and range. Coloratura soprano boasts a clear, crisp, light, and flexible timbre; lyric soprano possesses a bright, soft, mellow, and meticulous timbre; drama soprano exhibits a loud, thick, solemn timbre; mezzo-soprano features a full and rich timbre; while alto's timbre is even more profound and stable. In male voices, lyric tenor is bright, crisp, and elegant; drama tenor is loud, strong, vigorous, and powerful; baritone's timbre is rich and bold; and bass's timbre is robust and forceful. Different works necessitate the selection of varied timbres, tailored to the song's requirements. Each timbre serves to convey distinct emotions and artistic conceptions, and the choice of timbre for interpreting a work varies according to the musical style, emotional nuances, and range. This results in the multi-tonal timbre in singing. From a polyphonic perspective of singing timbre, “sound” represents timbre, while “polyphony” signifies the coexistence of multiple timbres. The polyphony inherent in Chinese art songs necessitates a rich variety of timbres in singing. This polyphony manifests through the use of diverse timbres to interpret art songs, including performances of the same work sung in varying timbres.

In a broad sense, Chinese art songs exhibit diverse singing timbres. For instance, He Luting's "On Jialing River" is suited for either baritone or dramatic tenor voices, Zhao Yuanren's "How Could I Not Think of Her" for baritone or lyric tenor, Shang Deyi's "Mudi" for coloratura or lyric soprano, and Yin Qing's "In the Moonlight" for mezzo-soprano. In other words, different songs require the utilization of various timbres embodying "multi-sound" characteristics. In a narrow sense, it involves delving into the intricacies of a song, meticulously analyzing its polyphonic timbral qualities, and allowing the singer to re-create the timbre through artistic shaping of the emotions and thoughts conveyed in the song.

Renowned singer Liao Changyong possesses a rich, mellow, and versatile singing voice. Through his smooth breath control and artistic techniques, he imbues Chinese art songs with rich artistic appeal. "Dreaming of the South," an art song composed by Lu Zaiyi with lyrics by Yu Youren, embodies sentiments of longing for the reunification of the motherland. When Liao Changyong sings this piece, he employs a desolate, dignified, and profound baritone voice, handling the musical emotions with tragedy, generosity, and melancholy, thereby evoking a profound sense of patriotism among listeners.

The same work also exists in a soprano version, notably performed by the young lyric soprano Wu Lihong. Drawing upon her unique timbre, she engages in a secondary creative interpretation of the work. Her rendition of 'Dreaming of the South' is characterized by a soft voice, a rich and magnetic low register, and an open, luminous high register. Particularly captivating are her nuanced treatments of the vibrato in the softer passages, deeply evoking the author's nostalgia for his hometown.

In summary, the diversity of timbres in Chinese art songs constitutes a vital element in shaping their polyphonic perspective. This variation in timbre exemplifies the multi-sound characteristics of Chinese art songs. Moreover, the work undergoes a process of re-creation based on different singing timbres, enriching the sonic tapestry of the performance. Consequently, only by selecting a timbre suited to the song's characteristics can a singer fully express the work's essence.

1.2.3.2 The Manifestation of Polyphony in Singing Forms

The performance of songs encompasses various forms such as solo, duet, chorus, and ensemble, each fittingly adapted to the stylistic and emotional demands of the

respective works. Art song chorus arrangements, adapted by composers from original compositions, transform them into polyphonic expressions, showcasing the multi-voice characteristics of art song choral music. Furthermore, composers have adapted the accompaniments of Chinese art songs into chamber music, symphony, folk music, and other forms, thereby broadening the polyphonic features of Chinese art song performance and presenting a seamless integration of singing and performance.

Manifestations of Solo Singing and Accompaniment

Solo singing accompanied by piano represents the classic form of Chinese art songs. This combination embodies a dialogue and collaboration, with both elements occupying equal status and harmoniously coexisting. The solo singing format showcases individuality, emphasizing the singer's emotional expression of musical ideas. Despite comprising a single vocal part, the integration of the solo voice with piano accompaniment creates a vertical texture that directly manifests the polyphonic thinking inherent in Chinese art songs.

In the accompaniment of certain Chinese art songs, creators have incorporated instruments beyond the piano, tailored to the content and expression of the work. For instance, Zhang Junqing's "Thoughts on a Quiet Night" features a male soloist accompanied by the xiao (a traditional Chinese flute) and piano. Similarly, Huang Zi's "Three Wishes for a Rose" incorporates violin melodies into its piano accompaniment. Some works have even expanded their accompaniment forms to encompass folk music, chamber music, symphony, and more.

Huang Zi's "Three Wishes for a Rose," a composition that blends the chanting style of Chinese ancient poetry with the romanticism of German and Austrian art songs, exemplifies this versatility. Beyond the typical piano accompaniment found in art songs, Huang Zi also employs the violin. In the prelude, the violin and piano play the same melody, enriching the overall soundscape. The solo voice enters subtly, forming a striking contrast with the violin's melody, which is both beautiful and tinged with melancholy. The violin's lower register adds depth to its expression of profound sorrow. This underscores the independence of the instrumental elements in art songs, which are not mere appendages to the vocal melody.

Example 5-50: "Three Wishes for a Rose" (Lyrics by Xu Zhimo, Music by Zhao

Yuanren)⁵

Andante

p

(小提琴)

p *semplice*

p *semplice*

mp

玫 瑰 花， 玫 瑰 花， 烂 开 在 碧 栏 干 下， 玫 瑰 花， 玫

mp

mp

Three parallel sentences portray three wishes, conveying the ardent desires of the roses. The first wish, with a soothing melody and subtle emotions, expresses the roses' unease stemming from their fear of wind and rain. The second wish progresses, broadening the melodic rhythm, revealing the roses' longing for protection. The third wish culminates in an exciting melody, where the solo and instrumental accompaniment blend seamlessly, manifesting the roses' yearning for life. The piano accompaniment employs seventh chords and triplets, infusing the work with internal momentum. The violin, piano accompaniment, and vocals harmoniously converge in terms of musical intensity, tempo, and emotional handling, showcasing the polyphonic nature of the piece.

1. Multi-voice Singing Form

As public aesthetic demands continue to escalate, the singing forms of Chinese art

⁵ Feng Kang. Selected Chinese Art Songs 1920-1948 Volume 2 [M]. Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2003:165.

songs have evolved beyond solo performances with piano accompaniment. Adaptations of solo art songs into chorus art songs have emerged, albeit occupying a relatively small proportion within the realm of Chinese art songs. Nevertheless, they frequently grace musical stages across the country. Common multi-voice manifestations of Chinese art songs include duets, choirs, and more. These multi-voice renditions of Chinese art songs are adapted from their solo counterparts, exemplified by works such as “Flowers Are Not Flowers” (composed by Huang Zi, arranged for chorus by Yang Hongnian), “How Could I Not Think of Her” (composed by Zhao Yuanren, arranged for chorus by Ma Geshun), “Ask” (composed by Xiao Youmei, arranged for chorus by Huang Youdi), and “I Live by the Yangtze River” (composed by Qing Zhu, arranged by Lin Fuyu).

The diversity and polyphony in the singing forms of Chinese art songs underscore their defining characteristics. These varied singing forms not only present a rich tapestry of musical imagery but also propel the development of Chinese art song singing forms through their multi-voice nature, thereby broadening the horizons of Chinese art songs.

Chapter 2: Training and Application of Bel Canto in the West

2.1 Bel Canto's Vocal Skills and Training

A unified consensus has been reached regarding the scientific principles and aesthetic tendencies of Bel canto's vocalization techniques. However, it remains challenging to obtain a consistent approach to its training methods. This is because the art of vocal music performance differs from natural science; it lacks immutable theorems or formulas to follow. Each instructor can impart a distinctive personal touch to their training methods, and each learner's voice characteristics, receptive abilities, thought processes, and even the shape and size of their vocal organs vary. Consequently, in practical implementation, the training of vocal techniques inherently necessitates individualized instruction tailored to each student's aptitude. Nevertheless, we can distill the common characteristics of training methods conducive to mastering and advancing vocal techniques by examining the practical experiences and theoretical insights of singers and vocal educators from various eras and cultures.

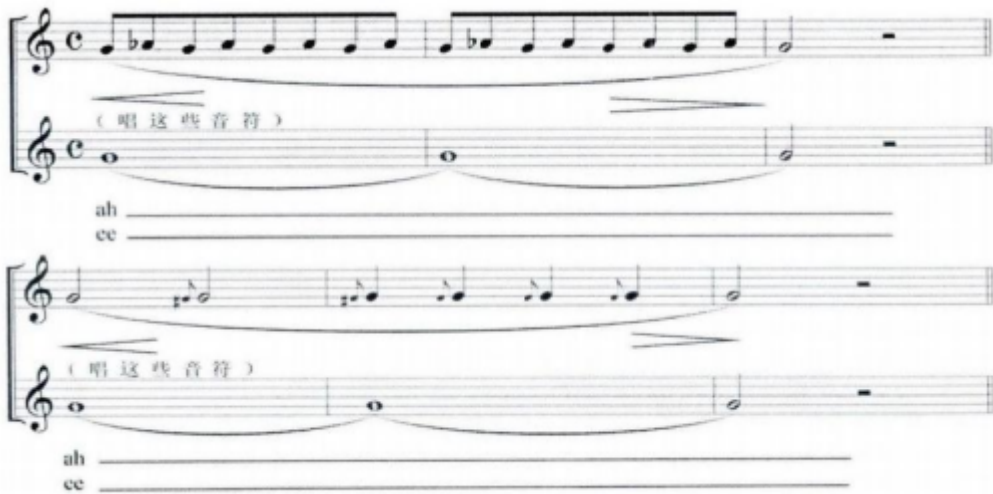
2.1.1 Basic Vocalization Techniques

The basic vocal technique refers to the fundamental elements that form the essence of musical sound in singing. Below, we focus on the analysis of legato.

Legato is one of the fundamental pillars of Bel canto singing technique. Regardless of the evolution of its means and styles, legato remains a paramount feature and fundamental requirement emphasized by all Bel canto practitioners and researchers. Legato entails a smooth and seamless connection between notes, vital in expressing the beauty and fluidity of melody.

Before delving into the connection between notes, it is crucial to address the maintenance of a sustained single note. After initiating the sound, its continuation is not merely a static hold but a ripple-like movement that necessitates a continuous flow of breath to propel the sound wave in the direction it was initiated. Alderson aptly likens this sustained sound to "a table tennis ball suspended at the peak of a fountain's vertical water column." The following training methods (Spectrum example 1) are also endorsed by him:⁶

Spectrum example 1:



While mentally focusing on the first line of music, sing the second line simultaneously, starting from the most natural vocal range and vowels. The purpose of training is to cultivate a sense of flow in breath and sound while maintaining a stable state, avoiding a rigid sustenance of sound. This feeling is also essential for the legato connection between different notes. Applying this breath support and vocal state, characterized by both stability and fluidity, to melody singing, and remaining unaffected by melody changes and articulation, ensures a smooth and seamless connection between sounds, fulfilling the requirements of legato in bel canto singing.⁶ Training for Legato can be divided into several steps, progressing from easy to difficult: first, converting the same vowel at different pitches (Spectrum example 2); second, connecting different vowels at the same pitch (Spectrum example 3); third, connecting different vowels at different pitches (Spectrum example 4); and finally, incorporating various consonants for complex connections. Each exercise should start at a slower pace and then gradually increase the speed, with slow practice remaining a consistent element throughout.

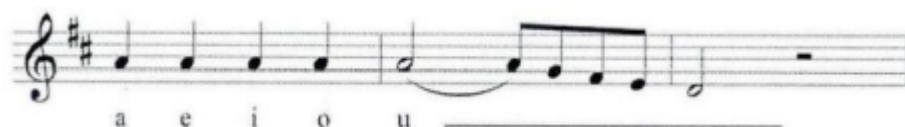
Spectrum example 2:(a)



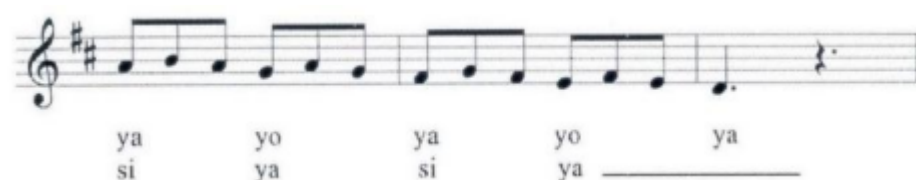
⁶ (America)Richard Alderson. Voice Training Manual [M]. Translated by Li Weibo. Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music Press, 2006.7, p. 62.



Spectrum example 3:



Spectrum example 4:



2.1.2 Agility Technique

Agility is a singing technique essential for embellishing decorative notes and coloratura passages. It builds upon proficient attack and legato techniques. If legato embodies the smoothness and fluidity of bel canto, agility represents flexibility and elasticity.

2.1.2.1 Vibrato

The primary prerequisite for training in vibrato techniques is to differentiate between trills (Trill), tremolo, and natural vocal vibrations (Vibrato). Trill, abbreviated as Tr, is a form of bel canto singing technique where singers consciously produce rapid voice vibrations while relaxing their throats, adding a decorative effect to singing. Tremolo, on the other hand, is an undesirable, unstable shaking of sound with irregular pitch, often resulting from improper vocalization methods. Vibrato is a natural tremor in the human voice, widely regarded as most pleasant at a frequency of 6-7 times per second. This natural Vibrato is believed to stem from the indirect transmission of nerve energy to the respiratory muscles and resonant cavities involved in pronunciation.⁷ To a certain extent, this natural Vibrato serves as a testament to a singer's vocal proficiency

⁷ Li Weibo. Vocal Music Miscellany [M]. Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music Press, 2011.6, p. 121.

and genuine musical emotion, requiring no deliberate control. Our primary focus here is on the decorative Trill, which can be flexibly manipulated by singers. Another crucial conceptual distinction involves Trill and Trillo (Tuscan Trill). Trillo is not a trill but a specialized coloratura technique demanded in Baroque-era vocal works, involving the rapid repetition of a single note, forming a distinct type of ornamentation from the trill.

The time value of the vibrato is identical to that of the marked note, thus resulting in both long and short variations. Short vibrato often conveys a more flexible and playful musical image (Example 5). Long vibrato, on the other hand, offers a richer musical expression and can be employed in diverse musical contexts, albeit more commonly found in lyric passages (Example 6). Regardless of their duration, vibratos usually conclude with an echo. In long vibrato passages, it is often necessary to incorporate gradual crescendos and decrescendos. This is not only due to the demands of musical feeling and expression but also because the process of dynamics variation can significantly prevent vocal stiffness during the execution of vibrato. For instance (Example 7), when the main melody of the phrase shifts to the instrumental accompaniment, the singing voice part employs a trill modification over a single pitch throughout the entire sentence, requiring a subtle variation in dynamics.

Spectrum example 5: “In Uomini, in Soldati”, Despina’s aria from Wolfgang Mozart’s opera “Cosi Fan Tutte”.



Spectrum example 6: “Sposa son dis prezzata” by Antonio Lucio Vivaldi



Spectrum example 7: Marguerite's aria, “L’air des bijoux”, from Gounod’s opera, “Faust”.



2.1.2.2 Staccato

Staccato training is of great significance for developing the flexibility and agility of sound. Before singing staccato, it is crucial to establish a full head resonance state with a small and concentrated resonance point. In terms of breath control, it differs slightly from Legato singing in that staccato requires a burst of breath at the glottis (vocal folds) to create a sense of sound rebound. The role of the abdominal muscle wall is particularly prominent in singing staccato, as it rapidly contracts to generate an instantaneous burst of breath. However, it is important to maintain control over this additional force to ensure it does not compromise the delicacy and flexibility of vocalization. Richard Miller likens the abdominal muscle sensation to the subtle twitching felt when suppressing a smile, emphasizing that the abdominal movement during staccato should be subtler than this to avoid sounding artificial.⁸

In vocal music teaching practice, staccato exercises often begin with progressive jumps of second intervals, initially within the natural middle register, and gradually expanding into higher and lower registers. An example exercise is as follows:

Spectrum example 8:

⁸ Richard Miller. Training Soprano Voices[M]. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 57-58.



After the second-degree progression, add jump practice involving the decomposition of triads.

Spectrum example 9:



Then progress to jump practice involving the decomposition of seventh chords:

Spectrum example 10:



The vowels employed in the practice should vary, ensuring that vowels articulated from the front, center, or back of the mouth are all utilized. The practice of switching between vowels within the same staccato exercise is highly prevalent and is regarded as one of the more effective methods in teaching practice.

Spectrum example 11:



During a series of staccato singing, the frequent movement of the diaphragm is primarily controlled through the contraction of the lower abdomen, enabling the breath to be continuously expelled or halted.⁹ Consequently, the movement of the glottis is more agile and rapid compared to that in legato or sustained phrases, but without

⁹ Zou Benchu. Singing: Research on Shen Xiang's Singing System [M]. Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, November 2000, p. 20.

imposing additional stress on the throat. Both the oropharyngeal and laryngopharyngeal cavities should remain continuously open.

2.1.2.3 Coloratura

Coloratura constitutes the essence of coloratura arias. Typically, its lyrics commence with a single syllable at the onset of the melisma, which then sustains the vowel throughout. Consequently, during the rapid modulations of pitch, the articulatory organs must remain naturally relaxed and accommodate slight adjustments in the resonant organs. The lips, teeth, jaws, and even the tongue must exert just enough force to sustain the vowels, without any superfluous effort. The resonance point during coloraturas is positioned higher than in typical phrases, with the nasopharyngeal cavity maintaining a consistently “high placement”(imposto) throughout, providing an optimal resonant chamber for high-positioned sounds. Coloratura is predominantly performed in legato, but the singing technique of Trillo (Tuscan Trill), involving the repetition of the same pitch, also belongs to the category of rapid, staccato-like passages.¹⁰ (Example 12) or staccato (Example 13). Regardless of the form, the performance requires both fluency and the creation of a full-bodied, granular texture, with each note possessing precise intonation and clarity of dynamics, akin to a strand of breath weaving rounded pearls into a seamless sequence. It is particularly noteworthy that there are two distinct approaches to singing coloraturas with legato connections. One method employs the legato style, prevalent in works composed after the Classical period, particularly those of the Romantic era. Conversely, Baroque-era compositions typically incorporate a unique singing technique akin to Trillo¹¹. This technique is neither purely legato in its continuity nor starkly disconnected like staccato, but rather maintains a subtle balance between continuity and emphasis on each note, creating a sense of accented importance. This singing technique imparts a sense of both continuity and discontinuity to the melodic phrases, significantly enhancing the speed of the passage while imparting a clearer, more distinct grain to the timbre. Manuel Garcia Jr. (often referred to as Little Garcia) posits that the key to mastering this technique lies in increasing lung pressure during the pronunciation of each note to accentuate the notes, expanding the laryngeal cavity, and avoiding abrupt disconnections or the insertion of “h” consonants before vowels (e.g.,

¹⁰ In the performance of “trillo”, the articulation “portato” is used.

¹¹ a specialized technique in Baroque vocal music involving rapid repetitions of the same note

pronouncing a as ha).¹² In Baroque vocal music, coloraturas and Trillo are frequently combined. Consequently, this singing technique is prominently featured in the works of composers such as Vivaldi and Handel, notably in the aria “Agitata da tue venti” from Vivaldi’s opera “La Griselda”.

Spectrum example 12: “Una Voce Poco Fa” from Rossini’s opera “Il Barbiere di Siviglia”.



Spectrum example 13: Selected from Rossini’s opera “Il Barbiere di Siviglia”, the aria “Una Voce poco fa” sung by Rosina.

a.



b.



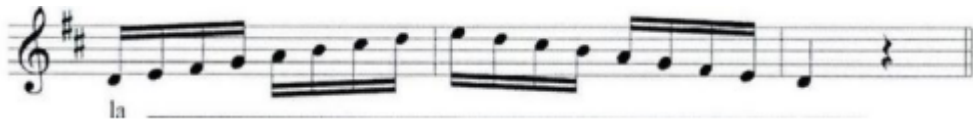
There are various approaches to practicing coloratura technique. Initially, it can start with a rapid scale spanning five notes (Example 14), which can then be expanded to encompass a ninth interval scale (Example 15).

¹² Dan H.Marek.Giovanni Batlista Rubini And The Bel Canto Tenors:History Technique[M].Maryland:Scarecrow Press,Inc.,2013,pl4.

Spectrum example 14



Spectrum example 15



2.1.2.4 Other commonly used decorative notes

Appoggiatura and portamento are important decorative techniques in Bel Canto vocal works.

When singing appoggiatura, it is crucial to distinguish it from acciaccatura. Appoggiatura generally requires a soft entry and legato connection, pausing at the pitch of the appoggiatura and then gently transitioning to the main note it is reliant on, with the appoggiatura occupying a portion of the duration of the main note.

Spectrum example 16: “La promessa” by Gioacchino Rossini.



The short acciaccatura should not pause or stabilize on the appoggiatura, but should pass through it swiftly. The appoggiatura part is executed like a dotted jump, swiftly sliding into the main tone. However, the transition between the two notes remains smooth rather than disconnected. The short acciaccatura is primarily employed in passages that convey a lively and flexible atmosphere. As demonstrated in Example 17 below:

Example 17: Rossina aria “Una Voce poco fa” from Rossini’s opera “Il Barbiere di Siviglia”.



The descending portamento is composed of a series of auxiliary sounds. During the descent to the next note, the intermediate series of auxiliary sounds must be arranged in a “staircase” pattern, with multiple descending steps, rather than a single smooth descent. This differs significantly from the descending portamento decoration found in Chinese folk songs. For example, in the Marguerite aria “L’air des bijoux” (Example 18) from Gounod’s opera “Faust”, in sentence a, the marked connecting line indicates an ascending portamento. In sentence b, at the final conclusion, the marked area for free extension is typically treated with a descending portamento.

Example 18: Marguerite aria “L’air des bijoux” from Gounod’s opera “Faust”.



After mastering basic vocal techniques, the application of the aforementioned subtle decorative notes relies heavily on psychological nuance, particularly portamento, which varies significantly in its usage across works from different eras. By engaging in extensive listening and appreciation of diverse works, one can develop a refined musical sensibility for effectively expressing decorative sound effects. These diverse decorative notes share a common trait of being light and agile during performance, with their dynamics mostly controlled within the *mf* or *mp* range. Centered on the decorated principal note, the decorative elements are often not sung in *voll* voice to create a delicate and flowing soundscape.

2.1.3 Dynamics

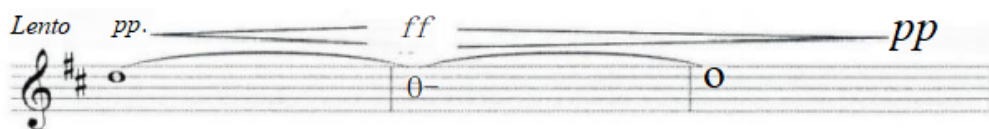
Dynamics, the cornerstone of Bel canto vocal technique, encompasses the crucial element of messa di voce. It involves the 'micro' regulation of breath support, laryngeal movement, and the resonance system, premised on the proficient mastery and application of fundamental vocal techniques. This requires a heightened sensitivity to, precise fine-tuning of, and impeccable coordination among the various muscular tissues involved in singing and vocal production. Consequently, in the pursuit of Bel canto studies and mastery, training in dynamics control typically commences once a substantial level of proficiency in foundational skills has been achieved.

Messa di Voce

The practice of Messa di Voce (hereinafter abbreviated as MDV) involves executing crescendos and decrescendos on a single pitch. This entails gradually increasing the volume from *p* or *pp* to *f* or *ff*, and then gradually decreasing back to *p* or *pp*. Naturally, this variation in dynamics on a single pitch must be applied to the dynamics of entire musical phrases. As such, MDV practice inherently encompasses the gradual changes in dynamics throughout a phrase, rather than being confined solely to single-pitch exercises. Since the 20th century, MDV has garnered significant attention as a core training element in bel canto vocal music techniques.

The primary objective of MDV training is to achieve the following effects on a single pitch (Example 19):

Spectrum example 19



2.2 Application and Analysis of Vocal Techniques

Bel canto's complex vocal techniques and ornamentation are not universally applicable when performing vocal works. Depending on the period, genre, and stylistic differences of the works, it is necessary to selectively employ appropriate technical means to convey the musical connotations and temporal characteristics embodied in the works. From the Baroque period to the 20th century, the stylistic techniques of each

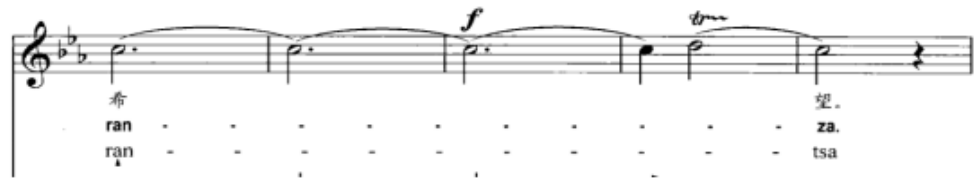
artistic period vividly represent the unique musical sentiments of their time, and each work genre also emphasizes distinct expression styles and forms. Therefore, mere proficiency in vocal techniques is insufficient to truly interpret the essence of bel canto. The ultimate aim of technical research lies in how to appropriately apply complex technical means to the works.

Next, I will take A. Vivaldi’s aria “Sposa son disprezzata” as an example to conduct a technical analysis of Bel Canto.

2.2.1 Elaborate Vibrato

Vibrato involves the continuous and rapid alternation of adjacent second-degree sounds, often occurring at the conclusion, to achieve a trembling and fluid sound effect. Denoted by “tr”, the singer’s throat muscles relax and consciously vibrate during singing. This requires step-by-step training, beginning with intervals of two to three degrees and gradually increasing in speed. Additionally, the intensity should be adjusted according to the character’s personality and emotions.

Such as: Spectrum example 20



2.2.2 Dynamic Leaps

In vocal music works, dynamic leaps are utilized to convey the image of music, enriching the melody while demanding a high level of pitch and intonation abilities from the singer, all without employing portamento.

Spectrum example 21

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. It consists of two systems of music. The first system features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The vocal line includes lyrics in Chinese and Italian. The piano accompaniment provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation. The second system continues the vocal line with more lyrics and the piano accompaniment. Dynamics such as *p* (piano) and *f* (forte) are indicated throughout the score.

System 1:

p

新 娘, 受 伤 的 新 娘, 忠 诚,
 Spo - sa son di - sprez - za - ta. fi - da
 spo - za son di - sprets - tsa - ta fi - da

System 2:

变 成 了 悔 恨, 天 为 何 捉 弄
 son ol - trag - gia - ta, cie - - - li che fe - ci
 son * nol - trad3 - d3a - ta tje - - - li ke fe - tji

f *p*

From Spectrum example 21, it can be observed that the continuous jumps of five, eight, and nine degrees depict the humiliation suffered by the bride in the play as she gives her heartfelt love. The big jump technique demands a high level of skill in voice area transition for the singer, requiring them to maintain a unified timbre while controlling exhalation and breath, and to keep a consistent singing position despite the transition between high and low notes, all in a high register.

2.2.3 Coloratura

Vivaldi applied the rapid scaling technique used in violin playing to vocal music composition, as evidenced in the 60-64 bar of the aria (Spectrum example 22). Through the execution of this swirling scale, the bride's conflicted emotions upon being abandoned are vividly portrayed. This singing style necessitates the singer to maintain emotional depth while rationally and swiftly hitting accurate pitches, with a consistent and even flow of breath, ensuring each note is clear, the timbre is unified, and the high

position is maintained, without any instances of missed or blurred notes. Continuous and effective practice in maintaining the correct vocal state is essential for the singer to deliver a flawless performance to the audience.

Spectrum example 22

The musical score for Spectrum example 22 consists of two systems. The first system shows a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. It begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking. The vocal line features a series of eighth notes, followed by a half note marked with a breath mark (V), and then a series of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and features a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a series of eighth notes in the left hand. The second system continues the vocal line with a half note marked with a breath mark (V) and a series of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a series of eighth notes in the left hand. The dynamics for the piano accompaniment are *pp* in the first system and *p* (piano) in the second system.

2.2.4 The Dazzling Technique of Extended Musical Phrases

Extended musical phrases require singers to possess strong lung capacity, as the castrato singers of the Baroque era possessed unique vocal abilities. Consequently, long phrases were frequently employed as a means of showcasing their virtuosity. In bars 35-39, the lyric “ran” spans four bars before concluding with an additional two beats of “za”. The singer must hold their breath for the duration of the 14 beats, performed at a largo tempo, demanding exceptional physical stamina and remarkable lung capacity.

Spectrum example 23

希 望.
ran - - - za.
ran - - - tsa

The above Spectrum example requires precise breath control during performance, avoiding breaths that are too deep or too full to cause vocal tension. These phrases should be executed through natural breathing cycles and the counterforce of the diaphragm. When singing the four sections of “ran”, ensure the breath is fully prepared to maintain a high vocal placement, and avoid opening the mouth too wide. The vibrato section allows the sound to rest fully during the following two beats, supporting the subsequent breath. The last section can be handled based on the singer’s ability, either exhaling fully or using a softer tone treatment, without compromising the expression of the character’s emotions.

2.2.5 Dynamic Control

In this aria, Vivaldi employs numerous dynamic contrasts. Typically, before embarking on crescendo phrases, the singer must master dynamic control, regulating the intensity, strength, and range of fluctuations. Specifically, in bars 69 to 73 of the aria

Spectrum example 24

望， 是 我 的 希
 za, la mia spe - ran -
 tsa la mi-ia spe - ran -

cresc.
f
cresc.
f

First of all, when singing, the singer must master the delicate rhythm of “la mia spe”, which should be initiated softly yet not lacking in substance. To achieve a “breath-supported” singing, upon reaching the high register, the singer should intensify the effort to evoke resonance. The mastery of breath and strength control is paramount in aria singing, as every phrase must be sustained by proper breath control; otherwise, the profound emotional impact of arias will be lost. Example 25:

Example 25 is a musical score for a vocal piece, likely an aria, in G major. It consists of two systems of music, each featuring a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff, and the piano accompaniment is written in two staves (treble and bass clef). The score includes lyrics in Chinese, Italian, and Pinyin. The vocal line begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a half note 'Cie', followed by a piano (*p*) dynamic for 'li che feci mai?'. The piano accompaniment features a flowing eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand. The score is divided into two systems, each with a vocal staff and a piano staff.

System 1:

Vocal: 悔恨, 天 为何捉弄我? *f* *p*
 gia - ta, cie - - - li che fe - ci mai?
 dǔa - ta tǐe - - - li ke fè - tǐ mai

Piano: *f* *p*

System 2:

Vocal: 天 为何捉弄我? 但他却在我心 *f* *p*
 Cie - - - li che fe - ci mai? E pur e - gli il mio
 tǐe - - - li ke fè - tǐ mai e pur *rè - lì - jì - lì mǐ - io

Piano: *f* *p*

The sentence “Cie li che feci mai” represents a pivotal moment in conveying the emotions of the injured bride. Thus, the singer should emphasize the syllable “Cie” slightly more to maintain the continuity of the helpless and sighing mood established earlier in the song. In contrast to the subdued tones preceding it, this necessitates a distinct approach to timbre and volume. Therefore, the singer should employ a bright timbre to convey the strength and conviction in their voice when handling the word “Cie”.

Part II

The performative expression and utilization of singing techniques in Chinese and Western vocal music works

Chapter 3: My Insights and Application of the Integration of Chinese and Western Vocal Music

3.1 The Utilization of Five Essential Elements in the Performative Expression of Chinese and Western Vocal Music Fusion Concept in Works-Sound, Emotion, Language, Performance, Aesthetics

In the course of my many years of vocal music studies, I have discovered that both foreign and Chinese vocal music works can be approached through the five aspects of sound, emotion, language, performance, and aesthetics. I categorize them into five essential elements of vocal music performance.

“Voice” is the fundamental attribute of vocal music art. Without beautiful voice, vocal music art cannot be discussed. Proficiency in sound techniques is a crucial prerequisite for emotional expression. The beauty of sound reinforces the impact of language and charm, making “voice” the primary element.

“Emotion” serves as the spiritual core and soul of singing, conveying the essence of the work. Emotional investment facilitates the natural opening of the vocal cavity, enhancing the expression of sound and achieving the harmony of “sound with love”.

The relationship between “language” and “voice” is complementary and interconnected. In terms of skill, addressing the unity of words and sounds signifies an important milestone for vocal music learners advancing to higher levels. Both language and sound are vehicles for emotional expression.

“Performance” encompasses stage presence, facial expressions, and overall demeanor, comprehensively reflecting the integration of “voice, emotion, and language”.

“Aesthetics” encompasses the ability to appreciate, manifest, and create beauty, embodying an individual's holistic experience of music.

In summary, the five elements comprehensively encompass the standards demanded in singing. Each element is representative and independent yet intricately interwoven with the others, forming a cohesive and complementary whole.

3.1.1 Voice

For the art of vocal music, voice serves as the instrument for singers to convey their thoughts and emotions. Singing, as an auditory art, is inconceivable without voice. An ideal voice should be natural, smooth, and possess a broad range, accompanied by

enduring and effortless control. It should be able to express weakness without being feeble and strength without being overwhelming, excelling in both ascending and descending melodies. Moreover, voice should be free-flowing and highly malleable, requiring mastery of various techniques and methods. Voice acts as the artistic medium and indispensable means to convey emotions. In singing, the beauty of voice not only enhances the appeal of linguistic expression but also opens up myriad possibilities for emotional interpretation. Without voice, singing ceases to exist, and without proficient voice techniques, musical expression cannot be fully realized. Different characters and emotional nuances necessitate the employment of distinct voices.¹³

Now, let me elaborate on the differences I perceived between some traditional Chinese bel cantos and Western Bel Canto vocal styles. In auditory perception, voice is an abstract concept. To make it more tangible, let's liken vocal patterns to a familiar glass. In the auditory realm of Western Bel Canto, singing embodies the auditory phenomenon created by the harmonious resonance and intensity of high and low frequencies. It features a clear and transparent timbre, sounding bright and round up close, thick yet not muddy. The voice possesses a sense of spaciousness, strong penetration, and a high placement, akin to a large, empty, cylindrical, and transparent glass suspended above the singer's head, creating an auditory illusion that the voice transcends the singer's physical form.

The essence of traditional Chinese bel canto singing refers to an auditory effect formed by the low-intensity resonance of high and low audio frequencies. The auditory timbre is unclear and lacks thoroughness, with a grainy quality upon close listening, muddy yet not robust. The voice lacks spatial depth and penetration, positioned low. It resembles a large, water-filled, nearly cylindrical, frosted glass embedded within the singer's skull, with the voice not fully transcending the singer's physical sensation auditorily. The reasons for this difference in sound type are as follows:

First, the current singing styles of some Chinese bel canto singers have misled the public's perception of bel canto singing aurally. After listening to their singing, people falsely assume that "bel canto" singing entails an unclear, non-thorough timbre, with a grainy quality upon close listening, muddy yet not robust, lacking spatial depth in the

¹³ Jin Tielin 's Art of Vocal Music Teaching] [M] Beijing People 's Music Publishing House, December 2008, p. 41

voice, and an effortful, emotionally indifferent performance. Adopting this sound pattern as their benchmark, over time, learners develop a misconception that any sound pattern clearer, more thorough, bright and mellow upon close listening, thick yet not muddy, with spatial depth and strong penetration, is incorrect. This misguided and erroneous perception has misled generations of bel canto learners, significantly impacting the essence of bel canto.

Second, misconceptions about “resonance” exist. It is wrongly believed that a muddy tone signifies proper voice “resonance”.

Thirdly, there are guiding errors by teachers in vocal music teaching. Instructors should orient students learning bel canto towards the Western Bel Canto sound type and teach them to analyze correct sound patterns.

3.1.2 Emotion

Singing requires “emotion guiding the voice, and voice embodying emotion.” The “voice” refers to the melodious, graceful, or powerful sound produced. As for “emotion,” it refers to the feelings that a singer is expected to convey through singing. The belief that “emotion guides the voice, and voice embodies emotion” has been deeply ingrained in me since I embarked on my journey with singing. Furthermore, I interpret this as a universal aesthetic standard for modern Chinese singing. This can be traced back to the musical treatises from the pre-Qin period in China. Later, amidst the interplay between Western music educational theories and the Chinese cultural environment, I embarked on reshaping and reinventing my understanding of singing mechanisms and ideologies. In my early days of vocal music studies, theoretically, I couldn’t affirm that Western singing necessarily adhered to “emotion guiding the voice.” Nonetheless, I persevered with this mindset, taking tentative steps forward.

Through extensive study and reflection on foreign operas, singers’ concerts, and various vocal music materials, and even through continuous experimentation with this approach during competitions and performances, I discovered its remarkable efficacy. Consequently, “emotion guiding the voice” became the cornerstone of my musical contemplations.

Naturally, in rendering works of diverse styles, the nuances and expressions of “emotion guiding the voice” vary significantly. While these differences stem from the intricate interplay of culture, language, environment, style, and myriad other factors, the

emphasis I place on “emotion guiding the voice” is fundamentally conceptual. This concept can not only establish a universal aesthetic evaluation criterion for music but also foster a universal learning approach.

In singing, my expressions and body movements are instinctively guided by the emotions within me. Generally, it seems that foreign works discourage excessive external gestures, advocating instead the use of pure vocal expression to captivate audiences, more so than Chinese works. However, on stage, I have achieved remarkable results, leading me to believe that there is no inherent contradiction between Chinese and Western musical aesthetics in this regard. “Emotion guiding the voice” necessitates genuine feelings; if the emotion arises from within and manifests externally, then why should these external movements be considered inappropriate? As China’s music embarks on a path of “diverse development,” we stand at the intersection of Chinese and Western traditions (but not limited to these), facing the unique experiences and insights of individuals towards their times, lives, and futures. Thus, singing with genuine emotions is not just a concept but a sentiment!

In summary, it is the shared elements between Chinese and Western vocal music arts that lay the groundwork and make their fusion possible. The unique characteristics of different singing arts, on the other hand, enhance their mutual appeal for exchange and integration, broadening the scope of musical expression and driving the development and innovation of vocal music art.

3.1.3 Language

1. The Language Challenge of Singing Chinese Songs with Western Bel Canto

The concepts of “clear pronunciation” and “rounded tone” are inseparable yet opposing yet complementary twins in singing. In recent years, the Chinese vocal music community has engaged in research and debate on these two aspects, primarily for two reasons: firstly, to examine whether there exists a causal relationship between “clear pronunciation” and “rounded tone” in the practice of vocal music art; secondly, from a psychological aesthetics perspective, to explore the relative importance and priority of these two elements when singing both Chinese and foreign vocal music works.¹⁴ Based on my personal experience in singing both Chinese and foreign vocal music works, I

¹⁴ Wu Bixia, *Chinese Music (Quarterly)*, 2009, Issue 2

believe that “clear pronunciation” and “rounded tone” are not only causally related but also represent the aesthetic value orientation shared by both cultural forms. Moreover, they are fundamental issues related to singing techniques. It is worth noting that my understanding of “rounded tone” extends beyond the universally acknowledged aesthetic significance of the musical form associated with gongche (a traditional Chinese musical notation system), and includes the exploration of the utilization of physiological organs.

Since the introduction of Italian “Belcanto” singing style into China, some have mistakenly believed that when singing foreign works, emphasis should solely be placed on the voice rather than the clarity of words, due to a lack of linguistic phonetic knowledge, one-sided understanding of singing concepts, or insufficient technical ability. However, this is incorrect. Early proponents and composers of Belcanto ideals, including Mozart and Handel, have already begun to focus on the agreement between the stress of language and the accent of melody in their creations. In the era of composers such as Schubert, Schumann, and Wagner, inspiration was drawn from beautiful poetry to create magnificent music, where poetry and music are seamlessly integrated, and the stress of each musical phrase aligns with the emphasis of the linguistic sentence. Thus, to sing foreign works today, we must diligently work on pronunciation practice and linguistic cultivation. Objectively, our lack of a language learning environment is a factor, but more importantly, it stems from a subjective disregard for linguistic pronunciation and insufficient practice. Therefore, striving to cultivate a strong sense of linguistic pronunciation and enhancing the ability to discern and imitate subtle linguistic nuances are crucial courses for professional singers. This demonstrates that even when foreigners sing foreign works, they also emphasize clear pronunciation and rounded tone, highlighting the need for a more holistic understanding in our past academic discussions. Regarding the proper pronunciation, I find that the singing of both Chinese and foreign works requires a balanced approach, neither too loose nor too tight, but just right.

The speech sounds of human language are composed of two elements: vowels (also known as mother sounds) and consonants (also known as sub-sounds), which in Chinese Pinyin are referred to as initials and finals. Singing primarily involves the effective rendering of vowels. A vowel is produced by the vibration of the vocal cords with an unimpeded airflow in the mouth (per Modern Chinese Dictionary). In human language, the sounds that can be sustained are predominantly vowels. For instance, the emphasis on the thirteen rhyme schemes in Chinese songs and operas, as well as the five vowels (a,

e, i, u, o) summarized by *Bel canto*, all serve to enhance vowel training. Consonants, also known as sub-sounds or initials in speech, are sounds that experience obstruction from the lips, teeth, tongue, palate, and throat during articulation (per *Modern Chinese Dictionary*). There are two aspects to their pronunciation: the place of articulation and the manner of obstruction. For example, b, p, m involve obstruction by the upper and lower lips; f by the upper teeth and lower lip; d, t, l, n by the tongue; and k, g by the throat. The singing of consonants requires precision and clarity. Otherwise, even if the vowels are impeccably sung, the audience may still struggle to discern the meaning of the words. This is evident in Chinese, where confusion between n and l, zh and z, can occur. Similarly, in Italian works, encountering double consonants, such as in “bellézza” (beautiful, lovely) and “nòtte” (night), necessitates not only accurate pronunciation but also maintaining the duration of the double consonants to distinguish them from single consonants. Failure to do so can lead to significant changes in meaning, as seen in the contrast between “caro” (dear) and “carro” (cart), or “pena” (penalty) and “penna” (pen). Furthermore, in addition to the role of vowels in rhyme resolution, consonants also play a part. This includes the anterior nasal sound n and posterior nasal sound ng in Chinese, as well as l, n, t, r, and combinations like _ch _cht frequently encountered in Italian, German, and French. Moreover, the obstruction manner of consonants contributes to the projection of vocal power and the expression of singing inflection. Consequently, the significance of consonants in singing cannot be overlooked.¹⁵

3.1.4 Performance

3.1.4.1 Emphasizing Rich Body Language

The performance in songs, or body language, is crucial due to the Chinese audience's appreciation habit of both listening and watching. In vocal music art, body language serves as the visualization and concretization of singing language, a vital means of 'externalizing' the singer's inner world. Even a glance or a facial expression conveys the singer's emotions, constituting a form of silent language. During the singing process, attention should be paid to the utilization of body language in the following aspects:

1. Utilization of Facial Expressions

¹⁵ Wu Bixia, *Chinese Music (Quarterly)*, 2009, Issue 2

Human facial expressions are incredibly diverse. Therefore, singers should adhere to the expression terms specified in the vocal works, employing eye contact, facial shaping, and other techniques to vividly present their facial expressions.

2. Utilization of Body Language

The performance during singing should be well-balanced, adhering to several principles of physical performance: (1)Unity of Performance Form and Work: Gestures, expressions, eye contact, and momentum during the performance should serve the content and emotions of the work. (2)Integration of Physical and Vocal Performance: Body language should support vocal performance. Thus, it should be harmonious with the singer's voice, breathing, music, rhythm, and tempo, avoiding overshadowing the vocals or becoming excessive. (3)Balancing Realism and Artistry: Physical performance should be both professional and appropriate, striking a balance between realism and artistic expression. Additionally, on stage, the coordination of hand, eye, body, technique, and step movements should be seamless, with balanced and stable posture, and natural, graceful, and logical transitions, embodying dynamic beauty.

3. Shaping Elegant Stage Temperament

The actor's image, appearance, and stage demeanor, to a certain extent, determine their image in the eyes of the audience. The singer's singing posture, performance form, words and deeds, eye contact, facial expressions, and every move on stage constitute a comprehensive image and temperament that must exude a sense of beauty. Therefore, singers should not only embody the beauty of voice, emotion, and body but also the elegance of temperament, appearance, and image on stage.

3.1.4.2 Handling Several Issues in Singing Performance

1. Second Creation and Works of the Singing Subject

Singing performance is the re-creation of vocal music works by the subject, which necessitates the singing subject's self-discovery within the work. The first step in self-seeking within music works is to find a creative alignment between the performer's self and the author's vision, which is crucial for vocal performance creation. The foundation of the singing subject's second creation lies in the work itself, which embodies the composer's creative ideas and the connotation of the piece. Detaching

from the original work during the second creation is not advisable; hence, clarifying the relationship with the work is paramount.

2.Communication Between the Singing Subject and the Audience

The practice of singing performance takes place in front of an audience, necessitating communication between the singing subject and the audience. Regardless of how deeply immersed the singer may be in their role, there is always a connection with the audience. Only through positive interaction between the audience and the singer can a performance achieve complete success. The singer's enthusiasm and the audience's positive feedback are indispensable. The singing subject's stage practice must withstand the test of time and must learn to communicate with the audience, either indirectly or directly, on stage. Communication between the singing subject and the audience is an essential principle of stage art and a law that promotes artistic development.

3.1.4.3 The Singing Subject's Inner Dialogue

The dialogue between the singing subject and their inner self can be likened to a form of "self-suggestion." Often, singers inhabit the realms of their imagination, where the lyrics emerge as an inner monologue, revealing the conflicts and contradictions within their psyche. At such moments, their intellect and emotions engage in a profound exchange. This self-communication involves visualizing the entire space as the environment portrayed in the work, enabling the singer to immerse themselves swiftly within the narrative, thereby emotionally resonating with both the audience and themselves. The singing subject attains the optimal physical performance state only when they achieve a harmonious inner dialogue.

3.1.4.4 The Singing Subject's Creative Involvement in Vocal Music and Opera Performances

The creation of a song vocal music performance primarily embodies the personality of the songwriter, integrating the singer's individuality and physiological attributes into a secondary creation that accurately conveys the essence and ambiance of the work. Consequently, the singer's physical expression must align with the scenario established by the lyrics and music. Based on a thorough analysis and experience of the work, every

gesture, gaze, and facial expression must resonate with the melody, tempo, rhythm, and emotional fluctuations of the music. Opera vocal music performance, however, transcends this by requiring the singer to delve into the script's storyline, comprehending the intricacies of the plot, conflicts, and character interactions. A comprehensive grasp of the musical structure and character imagery system is imperative. In shaping characters, the singer must grasp the logical progression and development of each character's psyche, thereby externalizing their internal life through the art of physical expression, including the eyes, gestures, and stage presence, all in harmony with the character's personality and behavioral logic.

3.1.5 Aesthetics

Vocal music performance art embodies the aesthetic value of vocal music works, a holistic process that materializes the spiritual essence of a composition during the act of singing. When songwriters create music, they present its aesthetic value solely at the spiritual level. However, vocal music performance art transforms this spiritual essence into tangible sonic experiences, enabling audiences to savor the genuine beauty. This art form represents a re-creation of the work, showcasing the unique aesthetic expression of the singer.

Vocal music performance serves as a pivotal bridge between the creation and appreciation of works. The entire artistic endeavor of humanity encompasses both creation and appreciation; only through the creation of works can we provide aesthetic objects and truly manifest their value. Yet, to connect these two aspects, the performance link is indispensable. Without it, works cannot be presented to the audience, rendering appreciation impossible. Within the broader framework of musical aesthetics, vocal music performance stands as an independent yet vital form of expression. It is an essential intermediary between the creation and appreciation of works, where composers rely on performers to meticulously convey their true intentions, while listeners rely on hearing and appreciating these performances to engage with the vocal work. Hence, the quality of vocal music performance activities significantly impacts the entire aesthetic process of vocal music art. Only through the exceptional performances of performers can the beauty and essence of a work be fully realized. Furthermore, it is the mastery of exceptional singing techniques that allows audiences to savor the wondrousness of vocal

music works.¹⁶

The application of aesthetics in vocal performance art during actual singing necessitates a clear understanding of its essential connotations and fundamental principles. Based on these principles, singers must apply them in practice, cultivate noble moral sentiments, continuously enhance their artistic performance skills, broaden their social experiences, and deliver outstanding vocal works.

3.2 Technical Application of Singing Chinese Songs with the Concept of Integrating Chinese and Western Vocal Music

3.2.1 On the Integration of Chinese and Western Vocal Music

Due to the disparate development trajectories of Chinese and Western cultures, histories, sciences, technologies, production methods, thought processes, and aesthetics, there exist notable differences in the theoretical research of singing techniques between the two. Traditional Chinese singing theories often rely more on the summarization of practical experience, with a greater emphasis on sensibility, feeling, and intuition, akin to “impressionistic” expressions. Conversely, Western singing techniques draw heavily on modern scientific advancements, conducting research from the perspectives of physics and physiology, and tending towards rationality, logic, and empirical reasoning, akin to “realism.” To excel in singing Chinese songs, we must build upon a profound understanding of both Chinese and Western scientific vocalization methodologies and effectively integrate them. In addressing the balance between sensibility and rationality, Mr. Zhou once imparted to me that in vocal performance, sensibility should slightly outweigh rationality, whereas in vocal teaching, rationality should hold a slightly higher precedence.

Finding a balance between incorporating Western scientific vocal techniques and preserving Chinese national characteristics is crucial. Due to China’s language characteristics, artistic aesthetics, social culture, customs, and other factors, when performing Chinese works, we tend to prefer a voice that is bright, forward, and exhibits relatively high resonance. Therefore, when singing Chinese songs, the singing skills should be adjusted appropriately. Generally speaking, Head voice is utilized more

¹⁶ Zhang Jinhua, "Vocal Music Performance Tutorial" (Volume II), Haique Literature and Art Publishing House, 1998 Edition, p. 78.

prominently in terms of resonance, the ratio of straight (or pure) voice is higher compared to falsetto, and articulation is emphasized slightly more. Of course, when adjusting the singing skills, it is crucial to maintain a balance in these adjustments. Adjust too much, and it can easily lead to overuse of the voice, violating the scientific rules of vocalization and causing vocal cord damage. Adjustment insufficiently, and the song's "flavor" may be lost, damaging the style of the work. The adjustment of singing skills should be within the scope of scientific vocalization, striving to meet the aesthetic requirements of the audience's music art. As Mr. Zhou puts it, "It should not sound foreign to Chinese listeners, yet retain a unique flavor for foreigners, being modern, Chinese, scientific, and capable of standing tall in the world of vocal music."

Of course, the technical adjustment depends on the specific style of vocal music and the language of singing. For instance, even within Chinese works, there are differences in singing techniques when performing "Toast to the Motherland"(lyrics by Liu Lin, music by Guan Xia) and "Missing My Mother" (a Yunnan folk song). Relatively speaking, the former requires a deeper breath, a larger resonance cavity overall, a wider voice, clearer enunciation in the pharynx, and a slightly more backward placement of the language; while the latter relies more on head voice resonance, with a slightly higher ratio of true voice, a finer tone, and more emphasis on oral articulation.

3.2.2 Handling Language Variations in Chinese and Western Music

3.2.2.1 Achieving both 'clear pronunciation' and 'rounded tone' is often a challenge in singing.

When singing high notes, the vowel is sometimes modified to ensure a beautiful vocal tone. In the high register, vowels can be subtly shifted in a direction that facilitates vocalization. This vowel modification is also prevalent in Bel canto. When the high note involves a closed vowel like "i", it can be adjusted towards an open vowel like "e" or "a". Similarly, in Chinese, vowels tend to shift towards "larger open vowels". For instance, "i" shifts towards "e", "e" towards "a", "u" towards "o", and "o" towards "a". If the highest note in a song is "e", the vowel can be adjusted closer to "a". If the singer's voice is tense, a shift towards "a" may be appropriate, while if the voice is too forward, a shift towards "o" might be beneficial. For example, in the Chinese art song "China's Land", the high-pitched syllable "di" can be adjusted from "i" to "a" as needed.

When performing vowel modification, it's crucial to find a balance between “clear pronunciation” and “rounded tone”. Whether to adjust the “word” while ensuring a pleasing “sound” in the high register, or vice versa, depends on the singer’s vocal abilities and the specific vocal work. Vowel modification is also influenced by singers’ singing habits and individual pronunciation patterns, making it necessary to tailor the approach to each individual. The purpose of vowel modification is to assist students in achieving both clear pronunciation and rounded tone during their learning process. It must be approached with discretion, recognizing that it is merely an auxiliary tool, and that ultimately, the fundamental principle of language processing in vocal music is to let the pronunciation guide the melody.

3.2.2.2 The Glissando of Vowels

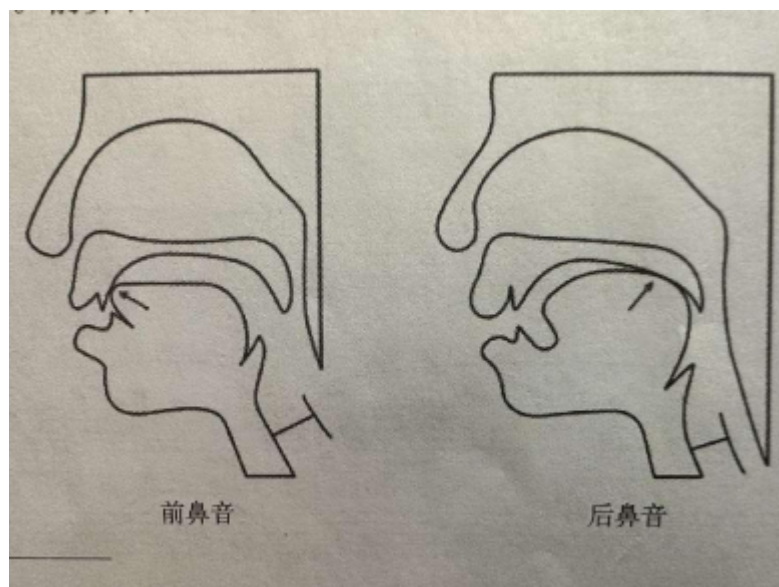
To excel in singing Chinese songs, a profound understanding of the characteristics of the Chinese language is paramount. Chinese phonetics encompasses numerous diphthongs that undergo a gliding process from “initial vowel → main vowel → final vowel” or simply “initial vowel → final vowel.” When rendering Chinese songs, the transition from one vowel to another, or the conclusion of a syllable’s rhyme, necessitates a gliding motion. Examples include “yàn” (艳) “i-a-n,” “chūn”(春) “chu-n,” where the final consonant is “n”; “yuè” (月) “i-u-e,” “yuan” (元) “i-u-a-n,” and “xiang” (想) “xi-a-ng,” emphasizing the nasal final consonant in pronunciation. During this gliding process, the articulation of each vowel in the diphthong necessitates a seamless transition from one vowel to another, involving variations in vocal tract configuration—sometimes narrowing, broadening, or reversing these trends. Additionally, the resonance position may shift dynamically, manifesting as a blend or slide across anterior, posterior, and central resonant spaces. This gliding between vowels yields a “composite sound,” unique to Chinese vocal artistry.

Moreover, precision in vowel articulation and pronunciation during this glissando is crucial. Overly lax articulation leads to muddled vowels, whereas excessive tension results in stiffness. Achieving harmony among the forces exerted by the soft palate (lifting), nasopharyngeal cavity (maintaining a high humming position), throat (opening downward), and breath (projecting forward) is essential. These four directional forces—“up,” “down,” “front,” and “back”—must be delicately balanced to facilitate a smooth, rounded vowel glissando. This equilibrium is crucial in songs like “The Song of

Nostalgia” (lyrics by Mao Yu, composed by Huang Yongxi), where many lyrics, such as “lèi” (泪), “jiān” (笺), “jiāo” (交), “gěi” (给), and “shuǐ” (水), require a skilled gliding of vowels.

In addition, attention should also be given to the distinction between anterior and posterior nasal sounds during the execution of glissando. In Mandarin Chinese, vowels ending in “-n” are referred to as front nasal finals, while those ending in “-ng” are known as back nasal finals. Both front and back nasal finals involve a process of finalizing the sound. For the anterior nasal “-n”, the technique involves positioning the tongue against the alveolar ridge at the end of the pronunciation, creating a complete obstruction between the tongue and the ridge within the oral cavity, while allowing the soft palate to droop, enabling airflow through the nasal cavity. Conversely, for the posterior nasal “-ng”, the tongue root is pulled backward as the sound concludes, creating an obstruction between the tongue root and the soft palate, resulting in resonance within the posterior nasal cavity. Here lies the difference in pronunciation sites between the anterior nasal ‘-n’ and the posterior nasal “-ng”.¹⁷

Such as figure :



3.2.2.3 The Issue of Staccato and Legato

¹⁷ Zhou Xiaoyan, "Vocal Music Art Theory and Thought Research" [M], Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, Shanghai, 2021.08, pp. 262-263

Coherence is a defining characteristic of vocal music art and a crucial aspect of achieving a rounded tone. Western vocal music often employs multi-syllabic languages, with pure vowel sounds, stable mouth shapes, and a prevalence of vowel endings (especially in Italian), facilitating coherence, or Legato, as it is emphasized in foreign works. In contrast, Chinese is a monosyllabic language, where each Chinese character constitutes a single syllable. When singing Chinese songs, it is essential to conclude each syllable with proper rhyme, following the process of “initial consonant → vowel → final consonant.” The mouth shape undergoes a transition from “closed → open → closed,” which can result in a sense of “disconnection.” Thus, to excel in singing Chinese songs, it is imperative to address the issue of Staccato and Legato effectively.

So, how can we overcome the “disconnection” in Chinese songs and achieve the “coherence” akin to foreign songs? It’s akin to stringing pearls together with a thread. In essence, this involves “linking clear articulations with a continuous flow of breath.” Specifically, in terms of Articulation and Pronunciation, the final consonant of the previous word should seamlessly blend into the initial consonant of the next word, following the pattern: “(initial consonant) → (vowel) → (final consonant, initial consonant of the next word) → (vowel) → (final consonant).”

Illustrated in the art song “Years Passing By”:

“jin” (今) should be sung as “ji-n”, “shang” (上) as “sha-ng”, and “guizhou” (归舟) as “gu-ei’zho-u”. Spectrum example: 26

Generally speaking, in terms of Articulation and Pronunciation, we should strive for clarity and power in the initial consonant, extension and fullness in the vowel, and accurate rhyming in the final consonant. The control of strength, tension, and duration

among these three elements is crucial to mastering Chinese pronunciation. While emphasizing coherence, it is essential to pay attention to the rhyming of characters, as failure to do so can easily lead to ambiguity. To ensure that the song flows smoothly without being disrupted by the final consonant, it should be seamlessly transitioned into the initial consonant of the next word. When singing Chinese songs, we must strike a balance between “coherence” and “rhyming” to achieve both clarity and continuity in our singing.

Regarding the question of whether to “break” or “connect” when singing Chinese songs, “coherence” also necessitates a sense of “degree.” Some songs require absolute continuity, while others necessitate moderate breaks. Whether to “connect” or “break” depends on the style of the Work.

3.2.2.4 Handling of Special Sounds

In Chinese vocal music, there are certain sounds that can be challenging for singing, such as “z” (字), “c” (此), “si” (丝), “ri” (日), “zhi” (知), “chi” (耻), “shi” (是), “yu” (雨), and “er” (儿). When singing these sounds, particularly in the high register, it is easy for tension to arise in the throat and tongue root, resulting in a tight voice and inconsistent Timbre. To address these issues, we should enhance the opening force of the posterior pharyngeal wall, soft palate, and larynx, while strengthening the pharyngeal muscles’ ability to adjust the Resonance position. This can help relax the tense areas. If necessary, Vowel Modification can be employed. For instance, when singing “ci” (此), adding a hint of the “e” (鹅) sound can enhance the spatial perception of the vocal cavity, making the voice brighter and clearer, while unifying the Timbre. Similarly, “ri” (日) can be modified towards the “a” vowel.

3.2.2.5 Reconstruction of Special Vowels

In Chinese Pinyin, there are three complex vowels, “u”, “ue”, and “ui”, which are abbreviations of “iou”, “iue”, and “uei” respectively. When singing, we should reconstruct their pronunciation to their original forms. For instance, Chinese characters that contain “ui” should have their pronunciation reconstructed to “uei” during singing. For example, “shui” (水) is reconstructed as “shuei”, “sui” (岁) as “suei”, “liu” (流) as “liou”, “you” (悠) as “yiou”, and “yue” (月) as “yuèi” for singing purposes.

Spectrum example 27-28: Art Song “Years Passing By”

岁月悠悠

黄嘉漠词
江定仙曲

Adagio con esressine

mf

5

cresc. *dim.* *cresc.*

10

mf

岁 月 悠 悠，
sui yue you you

p *rit.*

14

jiu qing fu shui liu yi qu nian
旧 情 付 水 流。 忆 去 年

cresc.

19

jin ri song ni shang gui zhou
今 日， 送 你 上 归 舟。

dim.

Chapter 4: Performance Expression and Technical Application in Western Vocal Music Works

4.1 Analysis and Application of Singing Western Art Songs

The definition of “art song” in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians states: “Art song is a genre of song created specifically for concert performances, distinct from folk songs and popular music, and typically featuring solo vocals.” Western art songs are known as “Lied” in German, “Melodie” in French (similar to the German “Lied”), and “Pamans” in Russian. This song genre possesses immense artistic appeal due to its seamless integration of poetic and vocal arts. German, Italian, and French art songs represent significant categories in European musical history, with notable composers such as Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns, Rossini, Bellini, Chopin, and Vivaldi contributing to their development.

Below, we will analyze three romantic-era art songs from selected works: “Ma rendi pur contento” by Italian composer Bellini, “Wie melodien zieht es mir” by German composer Brahms, and “Nuit d'étoiles” by French composer Debussy, focusing on their performance expression and singing techniques.

4.1.1 Performance Expression and Singing Techniques of the Italian Art Song “Ma rendi pur contento”

4.1.1.1 Song Introduction

Bellini, an outstanding figure among the early romantic composers, lived during the dawn of the Romantic Era. His works embody a harmonious blend of free romanticism and classical elegance, two seemingly disparate elements that he masterfully fused, lending his compositions a unique charm and depth. In 1827, Bellini encountered composer Polini Francesco and his wife Marianne in Milan, and as a token of their burgeoning friendship, he composed six petite arias for Marianne. These exquisite pieces were subsequently published by Giovanni Ricordi in Milan in 1829, catapulting “Bellini's Six Little Arias” into global renown, with ‘Ma rendi pur contento’ being a cherished gem within this collection.¹⁸

¹⁸ Gong Ni. Research on the Musical Characteristics and Singing Practice of Bellini's Art Songs. Art Research, 2017, (01): 200-202

4.1.1.2 Performance Expression and Singing Techniques of the Work

1. Utilization of Language

In Italian, vowels are categorized into monophthongs, diphthongs, and nasal consonants. Among the five vowels—*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*—there is no distinction between long and short vowels. However, due to variations in the methods and locations of articulation, the vowels *e* and *o* are further divided into open vowels (*è* and *ò*) and closed vowels (*é* and *ó*). Meanwhile, vowels *u* and *i* frequently manifest as semivowels, earning them the designation of semi-vowels. Notably, all Italian words conclude with a vowel, a trait that sets it apart from German and French, contributing to Italian's rich, rounded soundscape. Practicing these five vowels, arranged in ascending order within the throat as “*u*, *o*, *a*, *e*, *i*”, is imperative for all vocal learners. During training, it is crucial to adjust positioning based on the specific vowel placement while striving to maintain consistency for identical vowels. Given the linguistic characteristics of Italian, the consonants in lyrics are relatively straightforward, with vowels predominating, especially at sentence endings. This is evident in the opening line “*Ma rendi pur contento, Della mia bella il core*” from “*Enjoy Yourself*,” where vowels occupy a significant proportion, facilitating smoother phrasing and minimizing oral cavity adjustments for optimal sound production. Additionally, in the first lyric “*vi*” of the 24th bar, the vowel foothold is *i*, necessitating uniform voice placement, throat relaxation, and reduced tension around the laryngeal region. Renowned singers such as lyric soprano Licia Albanese and dramatic tenor Franco Corelli unanimously emphasize the importance of precise vowel placement, asserting that “good vowels are formed in the throat, not the mouth.”

2. The use of breath and the continuity of phrasing

The entire piece comprises a total of 29 bars, with an average of one slur per bar. The prevalence of these slurs indicates that the composer emphasizes the continuity of phrasing as paramount when singing this work, i.e., *legato*. Except for *ba2* at the end of bar 24, other slurs might perplex some singers due to the melodic development primarily occurring within second or third intervals, either progressively or in leaps, without significant pitch jumps. Notably, the pitch often descends in most slurs. Hence, maintain the stability and evenness of your voice during pitch changes; sopranos, in particular, should attend to the stability of their laryngeal position, avoiding undue force that might compress or elevate the throat after it's set. When singing passages with multiple notes

per syllable (see Figure 29), ensure the vowel position is clear; the voice should resonate within the vocal tract, not merely linger in the mouth. The Spanish soprano Montserrat Caballé, renowned for her natural and relaxed demeanor while singing this work, sinks her breath deeply into the abdomen, propelling the sound line forward with ease. Her fluid breath control is particularly evident in multi-note syllables, while the richness and depth of her resonant cavity produce a harmonious and beautiful timbre for the audience, enhancing the interpretation of the work.

Spectrum example 29:

The image displays two systems of a musical score. The first system, starting at measure 5, features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in grand staff. The lyrics are '我 顺从你的意志, 亲爱的人, 听我说,' with the Pinyin 'Ma ren-di pur con-ten-to, Del-la mia bel-la il co-re'. A red box highlights the vocal notes for the syllable 'co' in the word 'core'. The second system, starting at measure 13, continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are '助她把忧虑挣脱, 我虽然忧虑', with the Pinyin 'fan-ni su-oi pa-ven-to, Più deg-lia fan-ni'. A red box highlights the vocal notes for the syllable 'ven' in the word 'paven'.

At the conclusion of the piece, there is a large leap in pitch from c^1 to ba^2 , and the score indicates that the singer has the liberty to freely prolong the note on ba^2 (see Fig. 4-5). For the handling of the ba^2 note, one may refer to the rendition by Pavarotti. Upon repeatedly appreciating Pavarotti's version, I discovered that his pronunciation is extremely clear, allowing listeners to comprehend his singing content without needing to refer to the score. This revelation inspired me to emphasize that, beyond vocal skills training, singers should also devote effort to mastering the lyrics, particularly in foreign works, where accurate pronunciation should be given priority. When singing, the singer should adopt either a light or heavy approach, depending on the composer's intentions and the emotional tone of the work, yet the essence lies in maintaining a natural and

relaxed singing state. The voice should not become cumbersome due to adjustments in breathing or the utilization of resonant cavities, but instead should strive to impart a sense of intimacy to the audience.¹⁹

Spectrum example 30:



3.Expression of Tragic Emotion

The overall emotional tone of “Ma rendi pur contento” is melancholic, yet unlike the more expressive emotional delivery of other genres such as arias, it intertwines calmness with excitement, devoid of drastic melodic fluctuations and excessive tonal shifts. This serene and stable style poses a challenge to the singer’s responsiveness, necessitating that they convey emotion from within and manifest it through appropriate facial expressions and body language. Only in this manner can they genuinely express the song’s essence and foster a profound impact. The prelude boasts a beautifully crafted melody, with the first syllable ‘ma’ spanning just two beats. The subsequent rest in the following section cues the singer to discontinue singing, conveying a sense of despair that foreshadows the work’s emotional trajectory. As the melody descends, it should not be executed with a portamento effect; rather, it is a pure, unvarnished voice that poignantly portrays the protagonist’s sorrow. The composer employs the same rhythmic pattern for the second sentence, allowing for a consistent interpretation. In 11th bar, the phrase “my happiness is gone” necessitates a clear articulation of the protagonist’s inner turmoil, in accordance with the lyrics’ meaning. (see Fig. 31) Segment B maintains the same tonality as Segment A, yet incorporates several pitch variations, necessitating emotional modulation. When singing this section, it’s crucial to provide an emotional bridge that contrasts with Segment A, while avoiding premature emotional outbursts that

¹⁹ Li Yang. Research on the Singing of Three of Bellini's Art Songs “Six Arias” [D]. Supervisor: Zheng Xiuling. Northwest Normal University, 2017.

could undermine the overall performance.²⁰

Spectrum example 31:

5
我 顺从你的意志, 亲爱的人, 听我说,
Ma ren-di pur con-ten-to, Del-la mia bel-la il co-re,

9
我能原谅你, 爱人, 心里虽然并不快乐, 愿
E ti per do-no, a mo-re, Se lie-to il mi-o il mi-o non è. Gliaf-

13
助她把忧虑挣脱, 我虽然忧虑
fan-ni su-ci pa-ven-to Più deg-liaf fan-ni

16
比她多, 因我 为她而生活 要远远
mie-i, Per-chè più vi-vo in le-i Di quel ch'io

²⁰ Qi Min. Research on the Artistic Features and Singing of Bellini's Art Songs [D]. Instructor: Huan Jiumei. Shandong Normal University, 2016.



After reaching the 18th bar, there is a noticeable increase in the frequency of large melodic leaps. The lyrics “I live for her, not for myself” recur, and the emotional intensity gradually builds up towards a climax. It is crucial to note that the repetition of these lyrics should not be mechanical or monotonous; rather, the dynamics should be amplified to convey the protagonist’s emotions to the audience through the fluctuating melody line. This adds a sense of design to the singer’s performance, preventing it from sounding dull or uninteresting. Kabaye’s handling of the sections from the nineteenth to the twenty-sixth is exemplary, with each phrase imbued with precise emotional expression, akin to conveying music through speech. Particularly noteworthy is the ending, where the use of high-positioned soft singing techniques reveals a steadfast love. This approach perfectly encapsulates the essence of art songs by harmoniously blending emotion and content.

4.1.2 Performance Expression and Singing Techniques in the German Art Song “Wie Melodien Zieht Es Mir”

4.1.2.1 Song Introduction

Brahm’ art songs are among the most representative of the classical vocal repertoire in Western art music. He was passionate about blending classical music with national and folk music styles, resulting in a unique harmony of nationalistic, introspective, and classically balanced style characteristics throughout his oeuvre. “Wie Melodien Zieht Es Mir,” a Brahms art song, is the first of the five songs in his Op. 105, numbered as Op.

105, No. 1. Composed in August 1886 while Brahms was vacationing in Switzerland, the song was inspired by his frequent companion, the young mezzo-soprano Hermione Spies. It was subsequently published by N. Simrock in 1889. The primary theme of this song also echoes in the first movement of his “Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano.” The lyrics were penned by Brahms’ close friend, Klaus Groth, a Low German poet (a dialect spoken in the northern and western regions of Germany).

4.1.2.2 The Application of Performative Expression and Singing Techniques

1. The Use of Breath

The melody of this work flows smoothly, demanding a stable breath and a continuous airflow for steady vocal projection. During singing, the long, steady airflow generated by controlled breathing fully conveys the inner emotions embedded in the musical work, resonating with the elements of “softness” and “melody”. Although the melodies of the three sections are identical, each section requires a distinct approach to breath control during singing, with each bar exhibiting a certain degree of dynamic variation. This serves to express the song’s emotion in a more nuanced and layered manner. In the first section of the song, one should inhale gently while maintaining a relaxed posture, applying the breath in a softer manner, and gradually increasing in intensity. When singing the second section, the intensity should be relatively stronger, relying on the abdominal muscles and diaphragm to stabilize the breath and control its volume. Complete relaxation is not advisable; instead, the breath should be effectively utilized to support the voice as the melody progresses. During the final section of the song, as the second half of the phrase undergoes variations and incorporates numerous altered chords, introducing a minor key coloration, attention should be paid to intensity, with deep inhalation and controlled exhalation. Firstly, it ensures that the breath is not overly forceful, thus preserving the integrity of the artistic conception and emotional expression. Secondly, it facilitates the nuanced control of dynamics, as the manipulation of breath and the treatment of the voice are integral to the expression of emotion within the work.²¹

2. Handling of Singing Language and Articulation

²¹ Zhang Kexin. Comparative Analysis and Singing Interpretation of Brahms' Two Art Songs [D]. Sichuan Conservatory of Music,

In my training of vocal music performance, I frequently prioritize the recitation of lyrics, particularly emphasizing the recitation of lyrics on strong beats, as this approach clarifies the thematic framework of the lyrics and the melody's essence. For instance, in the first line of the song, "di," "zieht," and "leise" all fall on strong beats, requiring emphasis during recitation, with particular attention to consonant clarity and vowel pronunciation. Understanding the distinctive features of German pronunciation and accurately identifying the syllables of key words within each phrase of a song, once German pronunciation is standardized, is a methodology applicable to the study of any German art song. Additionally, in the work "wie melodien zieht es mir," we must observe the contrast between the three melodies, as the same melody may require emotional modulation to align with the song's evolving narrative. Ultimately, the goal of a song is to convey the literary significance of its lyrics, thus, vocal performances must adhere strictly to linguistic norms. Given that this song is in German, consonants play a pivotal role in showcasing the language's style and charm. German boasts intricate consonant clusters, necessitating the pronunciation of every consonant letter, resulting in a somewhat rigid tone. Consequently, achieving clear German consonant pronunciation poses a significant challenge. German consonants are categorized into voiceless and voiced consonants. Voiceless consonants involve airflow obstruction without vocal cord vibration, whereas voiced consonants involve both airflow obstruction and vocal cord vibration. Mastering the distinction between voiceless consonants, such as [f], and voiced consonants, like [g], is crucial to excelling in Brahms' German art songs. When the letters "sch" appear together, they pronounce the clear consonant [ʃ]. For instance, the first sentence of the song "schwindet" features this pronunciation. Notably, the pronunciation of "ch" in German varies depending on the following syllable. When "ch" is followed by "i, eu, or ei," as in "durch" from the first sentence of the song, it sounds like "xi." However, when "ch" is followed by "au, U, a, or o," its pronunciation resembles the "h" sound in Chinese, as exemplified in "doch, hauch, dennoch, feuch" from the song. Since these syllables are often followed by other vowels or consonants, we should anticipate the consonant pronunciation slightly to ensure that the rhyme lands accurately on the vowel's intended beat. This means pronouncing the consonant swiftly and precisely before the beat commences, enabling us to sing the vowel at the beat's onset. Additionally, attention to voiced consonants is crucial in this work. Take "Auge" in the song "Wie Melodien Zieht Es Mir" as an example. This word appears twice

throughout the song and serves as a poetic focal point. In “Auge,” the “g” is followed by the open vowel “e.” Here, the [g] is produced by vibrating the vocal cords, with the tongue tip lightly touching the lower alveolar ridge and then swiftly transitioning the consonant’s energy to the final vowel “e.” In contrast to the clear consonant [f], the [g] requires a relaxed, slightly open mouth, with the tongue tip gently curled against the lower alveolar ridge, forming a slight resistance against the hard palate. This is achieved with shallow aspiration and vocal cord vibration. In German, the letters “g” or “gg” are pronounced as the voiced consonant [g]²².

3.Coherence of Melody and Voice

The phrase of this art song exhibits an uninterrupted arch in its pitch contour, thereby enhancing the length and melodic coherence of the phrase. Notably, the theme melody of this song recurs as the second lead in the first movement of Brahms’ Second Violin Sonata in B-flat Major, and it continues to be frequently performed as a violin piece accompanied by piano. In this light, singers may fully embrace this work as a vocal instrumentalization, incorporating instrumental thinking into their performance. Our singing should emulate the seamless flow of a string instrument's legato bowing, which is highly expressive and possesses a strong linear sense. When singing, the entire phrase should maintain the continuity of the melody, avoiding frequent breath breaks akin to those in discontinuous bowing techniques. Additionally, during the performance, strive to perfectly integrate the voice with the piano accompaniment, creating the pinnacle of artistic aesthetic experience through multi-faceted musical expression techniques.²³

Spectrum example 32:

²² Xi Sha. Emotional Code in the Art Songs of Schumann and Brahms [J]. Vocal Art (Gechang Yishu), 2022 (05), pp. 51-56.

²³ Wang Ting. Music and Singing Analysis of Brahms' Art Songs [D]. Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 2019.

拱形结构

Doch kommt das Wort - und - fasst es und fuhrt es vor das

Spectrum example 33:

Wie Melodien zieht es mir.

Op. 105 No. 1

Klaus Groth

Johannes Brahms

$\text{♩} = 80$

Tenor

wie me lo di - en - zieht es mir lei - se durch den

Piano

5

T.

sinn, wie frü - lings blu - men blüht es, und schwebt wie duft da -

Pno.

4.1.3 Performance Expression and Singing Techniques in the French Art Song “*Nuit d’étoiles*”

4.1.3.1 Song Introduction

The lyrics of Claude Debussy’s art song “*Nuit d’étoiles*” are drawn from the poem “The Last Remembrance of Weber” by the French poet Théodore de Banville. Born in Moulins, France, as the son of an officer, Théodore de Banville began writing after graduating from high school, displaying remarkable talent in composition.

“The Last Remembrance of Weber” by Théodore de Banville is structured into four

sections. In creating “*Nuit d’étoiles*,” Debussy selected only the first two sections of the poem. These two sections depict the poet's reunion with his beloved in a dream, where she wears a white dress scented with roses and has eyes as beautiful as the sky. While the first section alludes to a somber dream atmosphere due to the loss of love, the second section focuses on the joyous reunion, despite the protagonist's inability to find love in reality, releasing his emotions fully within the dream. Debussy chose to retain the first two sections while omitting the latter parts that delve into natural forces and the realms of life and death, thereby highlighting the central theme of “*Nuit d’étoiles*” — love and sorrow, the lament for lost love and profound sadness.

4.1.3.2 The Form Structure

单三部—五部曲式							
前奏	A	B	间奏	A ₁	B ₁	间奏	A ₂
1-3	4-23	24-33	34-36	37-56	57-68	69-70	71-91
^b E	^b E	^b E-g-b	^b E	^b E	^b E-g-D	D- ^b E	^b E

Through analysis, the author determines the musical structure of this work to be a five-section single ternary form (single ternary - five-part form) with reproduction. The formal diagram of “*Nuit d’étoiles*” is marked as: A, B, A1, B1, A2.

While the work belongs to the category of single ternary form, its structure deviates from the conventional single ternary-pentalogy. Upon analysis, it is evident that after the exposition and middle sections, these two parts are repeated with variations. In A1, the variations are primarily in the accompaniment, harmony, and singing treatment, while the main melody remains unchanged. The crux lies in the assessment of the fourth section. Although significant changes occur in this section compared to the second, they do not diverge from the form of the second section, and traces of the latter are still discernible. Hence, the author contends that the fourth section should not be solely classified as C but rather as B1, signifying a variation of the second section. This formal construction, therefore, exhibits characteristics of a cyclic structure. In conclusion, based on the above analysis, we designate its musical structure as a single ternary-pentalogy form with repetitive reproduction and cyclic elements.

4.1.3.3 Singing Technique Application

Despite the song “*Nuit d’étoiles*” featuring a predominantly moderate vocal range with few high notes and a relatively stable melody.

However, it requires singers to maintain a steady flow of breath and possess strong breath control capabilities. In the piano prelude part of the work, the singer must keep the body relaxed, as tension in the body can impede the flow of breath, leading to an inconsistent or incorrect vocal tone. During inhalation, focus should be placed on three areas: the mouth, the chest, and the throat, while fully expanding the lungs and engaging the diaphragm. When singing the A section, special attention should be given to bars 16-17, where there is a leap from bass to treble spanning five degrees. The treble should be sustained steadily on the “ê” in “Je rêve”. To ensure a smooth transition between vocal registers, it is necessary to control the treble downward with the support of the waist and abdomen strength as the melody rises (see Spectrum example 34). During section B, the singer should typically take breaths at bars 4-5, requiring reasonable distribution of breath while ensuring the flow of breath. Otherwise, issues such as voice incoherence, inability to sustain high notes, and tail tone instability may arise. The first half of the C section melody mirrors that of section B, thus also requiring breath control and distribution. Bars 63-64 mark the build-up to the song's climax, necessitating not only stability but also strength in the treble, requiring a strong breath support from the singer to ensure vocal stability. Debussy's melodies are typically not overly turbulent, but the requirements for fluidity and coherence in singing are exceedingly high, demanding superior breath control abilities from singers to achieve a unified and seamless vocal performance. After years of professional learning, the author feels that breath is akin to the thread of a pearl necklace, with the melody and lyrics being the pearls, all connected by the breath. Therefore, breath training is not only a fundamental aspect of professional vocal training but also a continuous endeavor requiring perpetual practice.

Spectrum example 34: Debussy’s “*Nuit d’étoiles*”, Section A, Bars 16-17.



Because French songs frequently feature nasal vowels unique to the French language, such as the nasalization of the “um” in “parfums” in “*Nuit d’étoiles*”, the author observes that when the vocal point is positioned closer to nasal vowels, singers tend to more easily anchor their voice in place. Equally crucial to voice placement is throat positioning, both of which are highly abstract concepts, as they can only be perceived through sensation.

During the performance of “*Nuit d’étoiles*”, the melody flows smoothly, requiring singers to maintain a relaxed throat position (similar to the sensation of swallowing saliva) while singing. The greatest challenge lies in transitioning from bass to treble without raising the throat as the pitch ascends. For instance, the five-degree leap in bars 16-17 of “*Nuit d’étoiles*” necessitates individual practice, where singers should slow down and observe their throat position in a mirror during practice. Achieving a “loose, transparent, and rounded” tone indicates that the vocal technique is on the right track. This is a lengthy and gradual learning process that cannot be expedited. Cultivating a good voice requires patience and refinement over time.

Spectrum example 35: A2 Section, Bars 71-78 of Debussy’s “*Nuit d’étoiles*”.



4.1.3.4 Singing Language

Within the French alphabet, there are six vowels: a, e, i, o, u, and y. In terms of pronunciation, French comprises 16 vowel phonemes, distinct from German and Italian

in that all 16 vowels in French are independent, essentially devoid of diphthongs, existing solely as pure vowels. Consequently, purity of pronunciation is paramount in singing. Among these vowels, nasal vowels merit particular attention. Upon reading aloud, I observed that nasal vowels are not solely articulated within the nose but rather near the palate adjacent to the nasal cavity. “Linguists assert that nasal sounds involve partial airflow redirection through the nasal cavity, transcending mere oral sounds, as the airflow also reaches the soft palate and beyond”²⁴. French boasts four nasal vowels: [ã], [ẽ], [œ̃], and [õ], each with corresponding nasalized sounds. These nasalized sounds share a similar degree of openness in pronunciation, differing primarily in that the airflow must simultaneously exit through both the mouth and nasal cavity.

Certain letter combinations give rise to specific nasalized sounds: an, am, en, em yield the nasalized [a]; im, ym, aim, eim, in, yn, ain, ein yield the nasalized [ẽ]; on, om yield the nasalized [õ]; and un, um yield the nasalized [œ̃]. The work “Nuit d’Etoiles” prominently features nasalized sounds, for instance, the nasalized [œ̃] in “parfums’s um,” the nasalized [õ] in “fondo” and “mon’s on,” and the nasalized [ã] in “j’entends’s en” (refer to Spectrum example 36).

Spectrum example 36: Claude Debussy's 'Nuit d'étoiles,' Bars 10, 27, 29.

The image shows a musical score for Claude Debussy's 'Nuit d'étoiles'. It consists of two staves of music with lyrics in French and Chinese. The first staff (bars 10, 27, 29) has the lyrics: 暗 se et, 香 tes, par - fums, 忧 tris, 伤的 te, 里 ly. The second staff (bars 10, 27, 29) has the lyrics: 心 li, 灵 - e vient, 深 é, 处 clore, 慢 au, 慢 fond, 地 de, 升 mon, 起, 我 cceur, 听 et, 见 j'en, tends. Red boxes highlight the words 'par - fums,' in bar 10, 'au fond de mon' in bar 27, and 'tends' in bar 29.

French consonants consist of 17 phonemes. Pronunciation of consonants must be swift and clear, avoiding polysyllabic sounds or glottal stops. Key points to note in pronunciation are:

(1) The French [r] is typically a small tongue trill, but in actual vocal performances, it is sung as a large tongue trill, akin to Italian pronunciation. The [h] is generally silent.

²⁴ Chen Yanfang, "The Exploration of French Phonetics in Vocal Music Teaching," Journal of Central Conservatory of Music, 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 66-70

For instance, the “h” in “cest ton haleine” from “Nuit d'Etoiles” is not pronounced.

(2) French consonants distinguish between voiceless and voiced consonants, with [p][b], [t][d], and [k][g] forming three pairs of corresponding consonant pairs. When pronouncing, particular attention should be given to the fact that [p], [t], and [k] are aspirated before vowels. For example, the “p” in “parfum” from “Nuit d'Etoiles” is not aspirated.

(3) Consonant letters at the end of words are usually silent, except for “q”, “c”, “f”, “l”, and “r”, which may be pronounced in certain contexts.

Liaison: “Within the same rhythmic group, if the final consonant of the preceding word is normally silent, and the following word begins with a vowel, the silent consonant should be pronounced and fused with the initial consonant of the next word to form a single syllable”²⁵. Additionally, in liaison, “f” is pronounced as [v], “s” and “x” as [z]. For instance, in “Nuit d'Etoiles,” “rêve aux” and “aux amours” are pronounced as [rɛ'vo] and [oza'mur], respectively. The “y” in “tes yeux” also pronounces as [z] following the rules (see Spectrum example 37). However, it’s important to note that ‘et’ as a conjunction does not participate in liaison with the following word.

Spectrum example 37: Claude Debussy’s “*Nuit d’étoiles*” Bars 50, 67, 68 of Section A1.



4.1.3.5 Emotion Management in Singing

In the pursuit of mastering a work through singing, vocal music techniques are paramount, yet to forge an artistic resonance with listeners, singers must imbue their performance with emotional depth—a soulful expression that transcends mere melody,

²⁵ Zhu Guangying, “Introduction to Zero Basic French,” Dalian University of Technology Press

rhythm, and language. The piece “*Nuit d’étoiles*” sets a somber tone of melancholic love, weaving a nuanced emotional tapestry through the progression of its melody. It portrays a subtle sorrow over lost love, evoking a dreamy, serene ambiance. Structurally, the piece employs a form of repetition and reverberation at its beginning and end, reinforcing the emotional palette. Consequently, singers must meticulously navigate the emotional shifts between sections, building momentum towards a climactic emotional catharsis.

Crucially, “*Nuit d’étoiles*” is a French art song, necessitating a recitative-like quality in its delivery. Debussy’s reinterpretation of traditional bel canto acknowledges that, due to linguistic idiosyncrasies, French does not lend itself as readily to vocal acrobatics as Italian, thus lending itself more to arias rich in emotional fluctuations. As he observed, French is particularly suited for recitation, leading him to pioneer a unique style that straddles the boundaries of aria and recitative²⁶. The lyrics comprise five sections, with identical texts in the first, third, and fifth parts, yet each imbued with distinct emotional nuances. Therefore, singers must attend closely to these subtle emotional variations, executing a delicate emotional choreography throughout the piece.

The first paragraph of “*Nuit d’étoiles*” vividly portrays the starry night sky and the protagonist’s surroundings. The starry night sky is veiled in mist. A gentle breeze carries a subtle fragrance. Under the soft sigh of the lyre, one dreams of their lost love. When singing, it imparts a serene picture, maintaining a serene mood and a slow pace, leaving room for the subsequent repetitions. The intensity should be *mf* (medium strength). The singer should embody the protagonist’s melancholy. In bars 16-17 of “*Je rêveaux amours défunts*,” there is a five-degree leap from *do* to *sol* in the melody, pushing this section to its climax, with the intensity gradually building from weak to strong. The “*défunts*” at the end of this section gradually fades in intensity, and the music notation from bars 20-23 indicates a *diminuendo* (gradual weakening), signifying a need to slowly taper off the intensity during the singing. As the speed and emotion of the second section differ from the first, to effectively transition into the melody of the second section, the end of the first section must gradually slow down and soften, emotionally preparing the listener for the protagonist's sorrowful dreams.

Spectrum example 38: Debussy’s “*Nuit d’étoiles*”, Section A, Bars 16-17 and 18-19.

²⁶ Chen Lixin, "Debussy in Records," World Book Publishing Company



The second section of “*Nuit d’étoiles*” narrates the scenario within the protagonist’s dream, where a melancholic atmosphere gradually builds up until it permeates the entire dreamscape. It turns out to be the beloved one weeping. When singing this section, it should differ subtly from the first, establishing a subtle contrast, yet not overly pronounced, to allow ample room for the song’s eventual climax. The score bears the musical marking “Un peu anime,” signifying a slightly more animated approach compared to the first section, with the tempo becoming slightly quicker. Towards the conclusion, bars 32-33 of “le bois rêveur” commence a gradual deceleration, accompanied by a corresponding variation in intensity. During this segment of the performance, the emotions must embody a poignant blend of sadness and helplessness.

Spectrum example 39: Debussy’s “*Nuit d’étoiles*”, B section, bars 32-33.



The content of the third paragraph mirrors that of the first. It enters at a speed of 155, slightly slower than the first, pulling the protagonist back from the dream into reality, amidst the warm, yellow-tinged starry backdrop. The intensity on the score transitions from the initial *mf* (*mezzo forte*, moderately loud) to *p* (*piano*, soft). As indicated by the dynamic markings, the protagonist's sorrow should be intensified during the singing, conveying a sense of melancholy and wistfulness.

The fourth paragraph (B1) revisits the protagonist's dream, where he believes he has found his beloved. “We meet at the spring, where I behold your azure eyes that mirror the sky. Your breath is the fragrance of roses, and the twinkling stars are your gaze.” At the onset of this section, the term mark *Animez* (meaning “become lively”) appears, instructing the singer to infuse the protagonist’s excitement and joy into the performance. This joy gradually builds as the tempo accelerates, reaching its peak at bar 63, marking the emotional and overall climax of the work, indicated by the dynamic marking *f* (*forte*, strong). Subsequently, the speed, emotion, and dynamics gradually taper off towards the end of this paragraph. The speed, emotion, dynamics, and overall fluidity of the singing resemble a dreamy, swirling starry sky, evoking a sense of constant change and movement. The author believes that incorporating this poetic imagery into the singing of this section will further propel the emotions to their climax.

Spectrum example 40: Debussy’s “*Nuit d’étoiles*”, B1, bars 63-64.



The fifth and final paragraph of this song is a reproduction of the first paragraph. In literary terms, this constitutes a head-to-tail echo, a common device to elevate the theme. This section revisits the first paragraph, revisiting the depiction of the overall environmental ambience. The protagonist, depicted in the scene, gazes at the starry sky, sighing to the lyre and dreaming of his lost love. Meanwhile, the accompaniment melody slowly weakens until it disappears.

4.2 Singing Analysis and Application of Opera Aria

In a good opera, the aria stands out as the most artistically captivating and attention-grabbing element. In an opera, at least one or two arias are used to describe the personality characteristics of the characters, hence, arias in operas are typically solos

performed by the protagonist. Similar to the role of a “monologue” in drama, arias, due to their complete structure and the difficulty in execution, have become the highlight of the entire production, often featured as solo tracks in concerts.²⁷

The following will provide a detailed analysis of the classic aria “Una voce poco fa” from Rossini’s opera “The Barber of Seville” in terms of singing techniques and performative expression.

Performance Expression and Singing Techniques of the Aria “Una voce poco fa” (A Voice, a While Ago)

4.2.1 Introduction to the Author and the Work

Rossini’s operas are renowned for their lively rhythms, humorous melodies, expressive and undulating tunes, intricate coloratura passages, and enchanting ensembles that offer a refreshing experience to audiences. Among these, “The Barber of Seville” stands out as a masterpiece. The opera revolves around the love story of the heroine Rosina and Lindoro, which is hindered by their guardian. The aria “Una voce poco fa” captures Rosina’s reflection upon Lindoro’s serenade, evoking two distinct emotions within her: on one hand, her love for Lindoro deepens, and on the other, she resolves to overcome the obstacles posed by her guardian, Dr. Bartolo, to uphold her love. The aria, “A Voice, a While Ago,” essentially portrays Rosina’s psychological journey, with the melody transitioning from gentle and melodious to passionate and intense, embodying the power of love and Rosina's bravery and wit.²⁸

4.2.2 The Use of Performative Expression and Singing Techniques

1.Utilization of Language

Italian is characterized by its prevalence of vowels, with stress typically placed on the penultimate syllable of each word. During pronunciation, the lip muscles should remain relaxed, with open vowels pronounced widely and closed vowels sung with a wider opening. The performance of this aria, grounded in its challenging melody,

²⁷ [America]Jerome Hannes. Great Singers on Masterful Singing Techniques [M]. Beijing: China Youth Publishing House, 1996.

²⁸ Zhang Beibei. A Brief Discussion on the Aria "A Voice, a While Ago" from the Opera "The Barber of Seville" [J]. The Voice of the Yellow River, 2012, (6): 28-29.

necessitates a heightened level of linguistic proficiency.

Pay close attention to the coherence of syllables. In Italian, a syllable comprises a vowel and a consonant, and the connection between syllables essentially boils down to the linking of vowels. The stress of each word fundamentally resides on the penultimate syllable. This aria abounds with dotted notes, as exemplified in Spectrum example 41. During syllable transitions, clarity of each sound must be maintained while incorporating the rhythmic patterns to convey Rosina's shy affection.²⁹

(2) Pronunciation of double consonants. The double consonants in Italian should be stressed, as exemplified in Spectrum example 42, with particular emphasis on the sensation of an explosive consonant. When pronouncing, you can consciously pause before the first consonant in the double consonant pair to accurately highlight it.

Spectrum example 41, “Una voce poco fa”, bars 10-22.

U- na
美妙

vo- ce po- co fa qui nel cor mi ri- sus- nò, il mio
歌 声 随 风 荡 漾， 在 我 心 中 轻 轻 回 响， 它 使

cor fe- ri- to è già, e Lin- do- ro fu che il pie- gò, a Lin-
我 的 心 激 荡， 甜 蜜 的 爱 情 令 人 神 往， 啊， 林

Spectrum example 42 “Una voce poco fa”, bars 76-77

²⁹ Institute of Music, Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Foreign Music Dictionary [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing House, 1998.



2.The Utilization of Breath

“Una voce poco fa” possesses a distinct melody and rich comedic elements. It demands not only the mastery of challenging cadanzas but also the timely portrayal of the character’s personality traits, placing stringent requirements on the singer’s breathing technique. The singer must possess a resplendent timbre, a broad vocal range, and exceptional breath control capabilities.

When singing across large intervals, immense control is essential. Each syllable necessitates distinct levels of intensity and rhythm, necessitating precise control over the release of breath. The breath must instantly support the high pitch, followed by dexterous singing of the subsequent parts.³⁰

For instance, in Spectrum example 43, the singer expands the chest and tightens the abdomen for support. The strong beat is reserved for the high pitch, executed with an initial strength that gradually tapers off, while maintaining a concentrated voice position. With a smooth transition into a higher pitch, the singer portrays the gentle and serene demeanor of a noble lady experiencing joy and excitement in love.

Spectrum example 43 “Una voce poco fa”, bars 26-28.



(2) The B section commences with the interlude, setting the stage for Rosina’s

³⁰ Xu Yang. Research on the Singing Style of Rossini's Three Coloratura Mezzo-Soprano Arias [D]. Jilin: Northeast Normal University, 2008.

emotional shifts as she declares her determination to defend her love and vows to confront her guardian. The tempo transitions from a tempo to piu allegro, as seen in Spectrum example 44. During the performance, amidst the allegro pace and shifting musical patterns, it is crucial to maintain clarity of lyrics while stabilizing your breathing and keeping the resonant cavity consistent. The relationship between the vocal cords and breath can be likened to that of a violin string and bow; regardless of how the melody unfolds, each note should be sustained with consistent breath control.

Spectrum example 44: “Una voce poco fa”, bars 56-63

56

p *leggiero*

to so - no do - ci - le, son ri - spet -

我 多 么 温 柔, 我 多 么

57

to - sa, so - no ob - be - dien - te, dol - ce, a - mo -

啊 雅: 我 多 么 顺 从, 我 多 么

3. Singing Techniques for Cadanza Segments

Rosina’s aria “Una voce poco fa” is an aria renowned for its exceedingly challenging coloratura passages. The utilization of various cadanza segments at the conclusion of the B-section significantly enriches the melody and imparts a profound dramatic flair to the aria, earning it widespread admiration among singers and audiences alike. Consequently, it is frequently featured as a concert piece for both accomplished singers and vocal music students. This coloratura masterpiece embodies a lighthearted and humorous tone, filled with intricate and demanding coloratura melodies that are often structured through modal progressions and ascending-descending scales, with occasional improvisations by the performer.

The melody line initially ascends and subsequently descends, stretching the entire

phrase with its continuous flow. When performing extended segments, it is crucial to maintain vocal placement, fueled by robust breath support that enables swift breath circulation. The emotions are unleashed in the ascending portion, where each syllable aligns with four rapid demisemiquavers, as exemplified in Spectrum example 45. As the melody descends, it gradually subsides, capturing both Rosina's tenderness and intellectual acuity in the play.³¹

Spectrum example 45 “Una voce poco fa”, Bars 74-75



The cadanza section of coloratura is the most challenging part in terms of singing skills. In the fast-paced cadanza, one must identify the accents, adjust their breathing, and capture the granularity of the melody, avoiding slurring or missing notes. Each note must be sung clearly while maintaining a continuous breath. As seen in Spectrum example 46, since the cadanza melody is relatively long, with no breaks in between and a rapid pace, it is crucial to master the control and proper distribution of breath while ensuring the accuracy and clarity of the sound.

Spectrum example 46 “Una voce poco fa”, Bars 82-84.



The melody line in the work, which descends first and then ascends, featuring each word accompanied by multiple notes and a slightly faster tempo, poses significant demands on breath control and flexibility. As exemplified in Spectrum Example 47,

³¹ Liu Ying's Analysis of the Singing of Rosina's Arias in Rossini's Opera 'The Barber of Seville'—Taking 'Una voce poco fa' as an Example. [D]. Jinan: Shandong Normal University, 2018.

maintaining a steady singing state amidst a melody that builds towards a conclusive feel, allows Rosina’s psychological emotions to fully erupt in the final phrase. During the performance, the descending section necessitates meticulous control over breath and volume, gradually intensifying as the melody ascends, ultimately culminating in a complete release of the final note.

Spectrum Example 47 “Una voce poco fa,” Bars 114-115.



4.The Expression of Emotion

The aria “Una voce poco fa” poses a certain level of difficulty in singing. It necessitates the singer to convey a sincere emotional expression, grounded in a thorough understanding of the plot and characters. The narrative melody in the A section of the aria, akin to recounting one’s own tales, employs a soothing rhythm coupled with thirty-second notes within dotted notes, portraying Rosina's exhilaration and aspiration for love, drawing listeners into the narrative with music. As exemplified in Spectrum example 48, Bars 31 and 32, this passage captures the inner excitement of a woman in love, expressing her yearning for love to herself. The tone is subtle yet yearning, with a gentle pace of speech. Despite the limited range, the sudden leap perfectly reveals Rosina’s innermost thoughts. The leap starts strong and gradually fades, conveying Rosina’s boundless love for Lindoro and the maidenly shyness. Starting from Bar 35, we again hear “Ah! Lindoro, my lover,” but the mood is vastly different. The guardian’s nefarious deeds have not dampened Rosina’s determination to pursue love. This time, her tone, in addition to yearning for love, also reflects a stronger determination to uphold her love, making it even more resolute and passionate.³²

³² Song Jing. Analysis of the main arias and characters of the two heroines Rosina and Cinderella in Rossini's Comic Opera [D]. Beijing: Capital Normal University, 2007.

Spectrum Example 48 “Una voce poco fa” - Bars 31-34

Il tu- tor ri- cu- se- rà, io l'in- ge- gno a- guz- ze-
我的那位监护 人, 想把 好事 未阻

ul- la fin s'ac che- te- rà, E con- ten- ta jo re- ste-
但是我也会撒 谎, 把一 切安 排妥

rò, al- la fin s'ac che- te- rà, E con- ten- ta jo re- ste-
挡, 但是我也会撒 谎, 把一 切安 排妥

The melody in the interlude section swiftly returns to a free-flowing and measured allegro, embodying her self-assurance in her gentleness and obedience, underscored by a declarative tone. Following a brief rest, the rhythm intensifies, with the vocal range gradually ascending and the coloratura sections proliferating, characterized by a rapid descent from the high notes. As exemplified in Spectrum Example 49, “Ma se mi” employs three staccato notes to portray Rosina's wit and cunning, creating a stark contrast with the subsequent tense section, akin to a harbinger of resistance. The subsequent, even more intense music in the repeated section underscores Rosina's unwavering determination to confront the guardians who impede her love. Commencing from this section, apart from mastering language accuracy and proficiency, attention must also be given to breath control. Towards the conclusion, as the plot unfolds, the melody ascends relentlessly, vividly depicting Rosina's unwavering resolve to confront evil forces and pursue her love.

Spectrum Example 49 “Una voce poco fa” - Bars 68-69



5.Singing Aesthetics: A Comparison of Singing Versions by Cecilia Bartoli and Maria Callas

Famous singers Cecilia Bartoli and Maria Callas, though belonging to different eras and possessing distinct singing characteristics, have both delivered brilliant performances in Gioachino Rossini’s operas. The aria “La Donna è Mobile” is a renowned piece for the heroine Rosina, and both singers have portrayed distinct images of Rosina through their unique stylistic approaches. Bartoli emphasizes Rosina's wit and vivacity, while Callas highlights her nobility and bravery.

Born in 1966, Cecilia Bartoli is the most representative all-round soprano of the 21st century. Some music critics have commented that “Cecilia Bartoli combines the beauty of Bergonzi, the vocal quality of Renata Tebaldi, [the skills of a renowned virtuoso,] and the temperament of Maria Callas.”³³ In 1989, Bartoli made her debut in the opera 'The Barber of Seville' and caused a sensation, with people believing that she embodied Rossini's portrayal of Rosina. Bartoli's coloratura interpretation showcases exceptional singing techniques, supported by her impeccable breath control, delivering an exquisitely coherent voice that shapes a sweet, agile, and intelligent Rosina. Bartoli possesses extraordinary breath control, allowing her flexible coloratura to provide a seamlessly coherent auditory experience, even in lengthy phrases, which are rendered with exquisite beauty. Her singing technique is impeccable, maintaining a consistent voice placement while effortlessly sustaining breath through bass, midrange, and treble, creating a sensation akin to a deluge. Bartoli handles different passages with finesse, with bars 42-64 of the second act conveying a gentle and serene tone, followed by a

³³ Liu Yuanping. Bartoli's Singing Features and Vocal Contributions. "The Voice of the Yellow River", 2014, (21): 63.

drastic shift in attitude from bar 65, accelerating the pace and expressing resolute defiance towards her guardian, incorporating numerous cadenzas. The final section overflows with enthusiasm, culminating in a closing phrase that effortlessly blends coloratura and cadenza into a seamless expression, reflecting Rosina's unwavering belief in her victory against her guardian and the joy of love.

The Greek soprano Maria Callas (1923-1977) is an epoch-making figure in the history of 20th-century opera, hailed as the “opera goddess.” Throughout her career, she performed in over a hundred operas, showcasing a vast vocal range spanning almost three octaves, with the ability to effortlessly navigate from low A to high F3, thanks to her profound and intricate breathing techniques.³⁴ Whether it is an airy coloratura aria or a dramatic aria, she can master them all, interpreting the intense drama and the graceful agility of coloratura to the fullest extent, recognized worldwide as a versatile soprano singer. Carras had a keen understanding of the Spanish girl’s character. In shaping Rossina, the singer did not slow down the rhythm from the first sentence, keeping the music momentum alive. When calling Lindoro, she infused her voice with love. In bars 31 to 34, she sings with clarity and confidence, adding a touch of cadanza after 'E con-ten-taio re-ste-ro' to express Rossina’s affection for Lindoro. Starting from bar 65, the tempo picks up slightly, conveying dissatisfaction towards the guardian. Carras's singing is beautiful and clear, allowing us to appreciate not only her voice but also the essence of Rossini's music.³⁵ Carras, a dramatic soprano, possesses a rich and powerful voice that effortlessly navigates dramatic shifts. She garnered praise from audiences for her exquisite singing skills and innate stage presence, and her image left a lasting impression. Bartoli boasts an exceptionally rich timbre, coupled with exceptional singing prowess, infusing her portrayal of the Spanish girl Rosina, who dares to love and hate without reservation, revealing both emotions openly and boldly, with a profound sense of drama, rendering the entire aria truly magnificent.

³⁴ Zhang Yihong. Maria Callas Singing Art Analysis [J], 'Grand Stage', 2014, (11): 201-202

³⁵ Wu Ai. The Musical Image of Rossina [D]. Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 2006.

Chapter 5: Performance Expression and Technical Application of Chinese Art Songs

5.1 Analysis and Application of Singing Chinese Ancient Songs

Taking the Ancient Song “Yang Guan San Die” as an Example

5.1.1 Song Introduction

Singer Zhang Quan once remarked, “Chinese singers should endeavor to sing Chinese songs with their well-trained voices.” Among Chinese art songs, there are a number of lyrics that originate from ancient Chinese poetry. The fusion of music and ancient poetry imbues these songs with profound artistic expression and high artistic value. “Yang Guan San Die” is a typical example of this genre. It is a renowned art song composed based on the seven-character quatrain “Seeing Yuan the Second Off to the Northwest Frontier” by Wang Wei, a poet from the Tang Dynasty. This song belongs to the category of ancient songs within Chinese art songs. With the form of qin songs as its primary element, it boasts a rich literary heritage and artistic aesthetic value.³⁶

Mr. Wang Zhenya is a renowned composer and music educator in China. He has devoted considerable effort to the research and creation of Chinese traditional folk music, making outstanding contributions to the adaptation and composition of Guqin music. In this version of “Yang Guan San Die,” some lyrics have been omitted from the original, and new verses have been added to the end of each section, enhancing the emotional progression of the song. Drawing inspiration from Western compositional techniques, the melody and piano accompaniment integrate seamlessly with the characteristics of the traditional Chinese five-tone scale, vividly capturing the profound atmosphere and the poet's intricate emotions.

The song “Yang Guan San Die” comprises three sections followed by an epilogue, with each section corresponding to a “die” (a repetitive verse structure). Each “die” builds upon the same melody, undergoing variations and repetitions, and is sung three times, hence the name “San Die.” Prior to each subsequent section, the composition undergoes an expansive treatment, maintaining a consistent structure of verse (main

³⁶ Yang Yinliu. A Preliminary Study of “Yangguan Triassic” [J]. People's Music, 1956, 2(6): 2-7

song) and chorus. The main song is based on Wang Wei's poem "Seeing Yuan the Second Off to the Northwest Frontier," while the chorus features newly composed lyrics. The main song is narrative-driven, while the chorus takes on a more lyrical tone, with each section progressively deepening the emotional narrative. The melody is concise yet passionate, the structure rigorous, and the composition achieves a satisfying harmony between its beginning and end.

5.1.2 Utilization of Performative Expression and Singing Techniques

1. Language in Singing - Articulation and Pronunciation

Italian singer Caruso believed that, "Clear articulation poses no harm to the voice; rather, it enhances its perfection, focus, and softness." To successfully render a vocal work, one must first achieve a seamless integration of vocalization and pronunciation, conveying the song's content through a beautiful voice and articulate language. Singing represents a unique form of language expression, utilizing tonal inflections to convey meaning. In this context, the clarity of diction significantly contributes to the expressive power of singing. When performing "Yang Guan San Die," particular attention should be paid to the nasal pronunciation of words like "Qing chen" (轻尘), "Qing qing" (青青), and "Xin" (新). These words tend to flatten the voice, lacking dimensionality. Here, incorporating Bel Canto vocalization techniques can be beneficial. For instance, in "Qing" and "Qingqing," maintain a high spatial sense while swiftly emitting the "qi" sound and smoothly transitioning to "ng." Similarly, for "chen" (尘), initiate with the consonant "ch" and then smoothly glide into "en," akin to tracing a "C." This approach not only imparts a three-dimensional quality akin to Bel Canto but also ensures accurate Chinese pronunciation, emphasizing the rhyming process. Thus, when articulating, heed the nuances of "word head," "word body," and "word tail." The head should be agile and lightweight, requiring precision and ease in lip and tongue movements. Upon striking the head, promptly enunciate the body, relinquishing all forces and tensions associated with the head's articulation, retaining only the vowel's pure sonic state. The tail, representing the word's primary vowel, must persist until the emergence of the subsequent word. Regardless of the word's duration or the number of notes it encompasses within a melodic phrase, ensure that its vowel resonates throughout,

maintaining its integrity until the end.³⁷

Such as, Spectrum example 47:

渭城朝雨浥轻尘, 客舍青青

柳色新, 劝君更尽一杯酒, 西出阳关无故人。

The character “qing” in the phrase “green back of the guesthouse” spans three notes. Despite its brevity, it necessitates the delivery of the vowel “i” and subsequent return to the rhyme. The vowel body, being the primary and essential component of the character, is primarily responsible for the emission of vocal sound. While it may not be readily discernible in everyday speech, it is crucial to distinguish and exaggerate the vowel body during singing, extending its duration. The ending of the character, or the rhyme, is often overlooked. Imagine failing to return to the rhyme; one might inadvertently sing “huai” (of “ganhuai”) as “hua,” thereby altering the original meaning of the lyrics. This could lead to confusion at best and a contradiction of meaning at worst. However, overemphasizing the rhyme can also be detrimental, as it may cause the voice to fluctuate in width, brightness, and clarity, disrupting the unity of character and sound. When performing Chinese works, it is essential to convey the content of the song clearly and accurately express the emotional nuances embodied in key characters. Additionally, given the linguistic and semantic peculiarities of Chinese characters, special attention must be paid to their treatment during singing. For instance, in the line “渭(wei)城(cheng)朝(zhao)雨(yu)邑(yi)轻(qing)尘(chen),” the author did not include any

³⁷ Yan Xufang. Singing and Analysis of the Song "Yangguan Triassic" [J]. Voice of the Yellow River, 2015(2)

expressive markings or ornamental sounds for the character “chen.” Nevertheless, to capture the profound sentiment of friends bidding farewell in the poem, one could mimic the overtone effect of ancient qin music during the rendition, thereby enhancing the unique atmosphere and artistic conception of the ancient poetry.³⁸

2. Singing Techniques and Emotion Control

When performing a vocal work, the singer must have a profound understanding of the ideas and emotional depths the work aims to convey. During the performance, the singer must integrate vocal proficiency with emotional expression through musical nuances such as tempo and dynamics, as well as through physical gestures and movements to deliver a truly captivating rendition. Regarding tempo control, the first and second sections feature a relatively steady and elongated rhythm, requiring the singer to adhere strictly to the prescribed tempo indicated in the score, without significant variations. However, as the piece progresses into the third section, marked by heightened emotions, the singer may introduce subtle tempo variations to convey the author's intense feelings. For instance, when singing the line “though not yet tasted, the heart is already intoxicated (chun),” the singer can utilize a free extension mark to allow for a more liberated tempo, facilitating the release of emotions. It is crucial to note that while adhering to the composer's dynamic markings, the singer should also exercise discretion in adjusting the tempo based on personal interpretation. Given the unique tripartite structure of “Yang Guan San Die,” each section incorporates repetitive phrases that progressively enrich the theme and elevate the emotional depth of the song.³⁹ When singing these phrases, subtle variations in tempo are crucial. During the initial occurrence, maintain a steady breath, avoiding sluggishness and ensuring a crisp and concise delivery. Upon the reappearance of the same phrase, with emotions intensified, adjust the tempo slightly, slowing down the singing to allow the emotions to settle. This approach imparts a sense of balance and tension to the voice, fostering greater resonance with the audience. Additionally, controlling the dynamics during singing significantly contributes to enhancing the overall ambiance of the song. It is essential to adhere to the marked dynamic changes in the score while also integrating personal interpretation for a

³⁸ Luo Yi. How to Sing Ancient Poetry Songs 'Yangguan Triassic' in Bel Canto [J]. Northern Music, 2019(2)

³⁹ Mao Yaxiong. A Brief Discussion on Emotional Expression in Song Singing: A Case Study of "Yangguan Triassic" [J]. The Sound of the Yellow River, 2013, (11): 37-38.

secondary creative layer.

Several key points merit attention, particularly at bars 48, 53, and 55, where *f* (strong) and *ff* (very strong) dynamic markings contrast with previous sections. When tackling these segments, employ humming to locate the resonance in the higher registers and couple it with ample breath support to achieve a vibrant and clear voice quality.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the transition from *mf* (medium strong) to *ppp* (very soft) in the coda necessitates a pronounced change in dynamics. Within a mere four bars, it's vital to restrain the voice, requiring careful control, gentle breath propulsion, and soft singing while maintaining the high resonance. For instance, spectrum example 48 illustrates this technique.

The image displays a musical score for the song "Yang Guan San Die". It consists of two systems of music. The first system, starting at bar 48, features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked "moderato". The vocal line includes the lyrics "醇。 载 驰 驱， 载 驰 驱， 何 日 言 旋 轩 辚， 能 酌 几 多". The piano accompaniment is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system, starting at bar 52, continues the vocal and piano parts. The vocal line has the lyrics "巡？ 千 巡 有 尽， 寸 衷 难 泯 无 穷 的 伤". The piano accompaniment is marked with a mezzo-forte (*mp*) and forte (*f*) dynamic. The system concludes with a very strong (*ff*) dynamic, followed by "rit." (ritardando), "dim." (diminuendo), and "p" (piano) markings.

3.Stage Performance

When it comes to body language, we must pay close attention to three key elements: eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures. In singing, the use of eye contact can reveal the inner characteristics of characters, playing a vital role in expressing their emotions. In the progressively structured work of “Yang Guan San Die”, the eyes should

⁴⁰ Li Muge. Vocal Interpretation and Work Analysis of the Ancient Chinese Song "Yangguan Triassic" [D]. Chongqing Normal University, 2018

reflect different emotions in each verse. In the first verse, as the character bids farewell to their friend, portraying the hardships of the journey ahead, the eyes should convey concern and reluctance towards the friends. In the second verse, focusing on nostalgia, as the friend hasn't gone far yet, the character already begins to miss them. At this point, the eyes can slowly look from near to far, reflecting the feelings of missing friends. In the third verse, as the song nears its conclusion, the emotion gradually transitions from excitement to tranquility. At the end, the singer can slightly close their eyes with the melody, leaving the audience with space for imagination. In terms of facial expressions, they should align with the emotional tone of the work. The song "Yang Guan San Die" primarily conveys the author's profound reluctance in bidding farewell to friends. Therefore, facial expressions should embody a sense of sadness, with eyebrows slightly raised and smiles not overly exaggerated. This allows the performance to be more in line with the emotion of the work, showcasing greater delicacy. As for gestures, they should not be too exaggerated. Given the song's rich ancient charm, gestures should be designed to be subtle and not overly exaggerated.

4. Aesthetic Thoughts

"Yang Guan San Die" originated in the Tang Dynasty. Influenced by Confucianism and Taoism, numerous forms of singing and performance existed during that period, leading to a significant breakthrough in the genre. With the evolution spanning thousands of years, it eventually evolved into the song form we see today. In the Tang Dynasty, the two art forms of poetry and music complemented each other, learned from each other, and jointly reached the pinnacle of development. As the art of voice, singing attained significant achievements in its development during that era. Poetry and music, two art forms as means of expressing human emotion, reached their peak in the Tang Dynasty, and they were intimately connected. Poetry incorporated into music became a popular trend at that time. Composers had to select poetry that seamlessly blended with music, achieving a certain degree of harmony, and harmonize the aesthetic ideas of music with the aesthetic perceptions of music appreciation.⁴¹ For this song, Wang Wei, who had a profound understanding of music and musical temperament, and his contemporaries, created poems while socializing and entertaining. They took poems as the object of creation, assigned them to music, utilized the aesthetic concepts of the time,

⁴¹ Wang Cizhao. Music Aesthetics Foundation [M]. People's Music Publishing House, 1992

combined lyrics and music skillfully, and created music that resonates with the public aesthetic sensibilities.

5.2 The Analysis and Application of Chinese Modern Art Songs

Take “The Yellow River Indignation” as an Example

5.2.1 Song Introduction

“The Yellow River Suite” was composed by Xian Xinghai in 1939, featuring a variety of singing forms. This musical composition was created against the backdrop of the Anti-Japanese War, taking the Yellow River as the spiritual symbol of the Chinese people and warmly praising the heroic spirit of their indomitable and arduous struggle. As one of the earlier Chinese students to study abroad, Xian Xinghai went to France to learn composition. He incorporated Western composition techniques into his works, often utilizing Chinese poetry or traditional music as inspiration. “The Yellow River Suite” stands as a classic example of the fusion of Chinese and Western elements. “The Yellow River Indignation” is the sixth movement selected from this suite. The song narrates the story of a Chinese woman during the Anti-Japanese War, who was insulted on enemy-occupied land and suffered the tragic loss of her children and husband at the hands of the enemy. Amidst this desperate situation, her grief is poured out to the mother river, and she vows to fight to the end, venting her love, hatred, and anger. This work not only carries on the traditions of Chinese national music culture but also embodies its unique red cultural landscape.⁴²

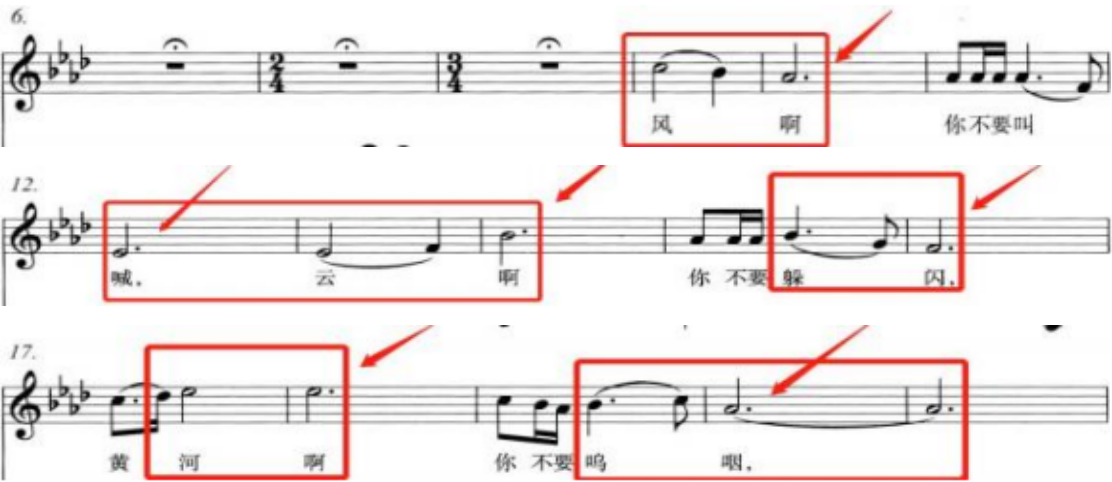
“The Yellow River Indignation” has been composed for over 80 years. It is an artistic song of high caliber, still beloved and performed by numerous renowned singers. Composer Xian Xinghai employed the “through-composed song” format, endowing “The Yellow River Indignation” with an aria-recitative style that marries the narrative quality of opera recitative with the lyricism of aria, effectively conveying the intense emotional drama within the lyrics. Thus, this work stands as both an art song and an aria. For a bel canto soprano, performing vocal works that integrate Chinese and Western elements, “The Yellow River Indignation” is not only a quintessential example but also a

⁴² Xu Ling. Exploration of the Interpretation Strategies for the Solo Song "Huanghe Yuan" [J]. Grand Stage, 2014, 318(11): 163-164.

crucial test in vocal music studies, a true litmus test of one’s proficiency.

5.2.2 Vocal Production and Breath Control

The song “The Yellow River Indignation” features a slow tempo, with a moderate pitch range in its first half, necessitating precise and smooth breath control. Consequently, it is imperative to regulate your breathing, allowing your breath to flow steadily, thereby imparting vitality and appeal to your vocal production. Spectrum Example 49:



5.2.3 The application of performative expression and singing techniques

As demonstrated in Spectrum example 49, the length of the phrase allows for gentle humming in the middle without arbitrary breaths, posing certain demands on the singer’s breath control skills. For instance, “wind, you don’t shout” should be sung in one breath, followed by a breath after reaching the word “flash”, and then another breath after the next/subsequent word. Avoid exhaling all at once; instead, hum slowly and evenly, conveying a sense of whispering, as if telling the story in a hushed tone.

Spectrum example 50:





Spectrum example 5.6 represents the conclusion of the song. The first sentence is in 6/8 beat slightly faster, with the music term (*poco mosso*) indicating a slightly accelerated pace. It then transitions to 3/4 beat with a slower tempo. The subsequent sentence significantly emphasizes the preceding one. After quickly singing the previous sentence, quickly relax your waist and back, allowing the entire body to completely relax and calm down. Sing “You want to replace me...” with a slow, sighing feeling. Then, take a breath after the word “pen”, firmly establish the pitches “xi re fa” corresponding to the word 'blood', maintain the high position above, and sink down with a sighing method. Envision the lower abdomen as a breath control mechanism, and push it inward to evenly send the breath out. As for the word “debt”, the breath cannot be lifted. Continue to sigh and concentrate the power on the high note “re”, and then slowly prolong the final two words, ending with a drawn-out “return”.⁴³

1.Application of Ornamentation Techniques

In the process of singing, it is crucial to effectively employ ornamentation techniques and proper articulation and pronunciation methods. The ornamentation techniques specifically encompass pauses, sobbing tones, and decorative notes, among others. The application of these techniques is primarily guided by the notation and lyrical content of the song, with a single musical phrase potentially incorporating multiple ornamentation techniques.

Spectrum example 51:



⁴³ Kong Na. Singing Practice Exploration of Soprano Aria 'The Yellow River Indignation' [D]. Liaoning Normal University, 2021.



Spectrum Example 51 emphasizes a series of five consecutive dotted notes, which underscore the sorrowful sentiment in the lyrics. The “bitter” in “so bitter” is the sole instance of a decorative note throughout the entire composition, further emphasizing the intensity of the “bitterness.” When singing the subsequent phrase “no heart, no liver,” the singer should aim for a sense of staccato delivery, with each word piercing through the listener's heart, conveying a profound hatred for the enemy. Subsequently, in the final phrase, the singer should adopt a weeping cadenza for the word “miserable,” as the melody descends to its nadir. This moment encapsulates the devastating grief of losing a child, rendering the singer to sob while maintaining a high placement for the word “miserable,” ultimately exhaling it with a sigh. ⁴⁴

2. Grasping Emotion in Singing

The aim of vocal music performance is to evoke resonance in the audience by conveying the emotions embedded within the song. This necessitates the singer to analyze the emotional expression of the song prior to singing and comprehend the fluctuations of emotion during the performance, thereby better interpreting the intended emotions. The four sections of “The Yellow River Indignation” each convey distinct emotional expressions, progressing layer by layer, akin to unfolding a series of stories. Thus, meticulous handling of the song’s emotions is paramount.

Grasping emotion is the core of the entire song. The treatment of emotional expression should not be confined to mere sadness; rather, it should evolve with the progression of the music, alternating between lows and highs. Despite the song's unifying theme, it is characterized by profound emotional fluctuations. In the context of “The Yellow River Indignation”, the first section depicts women crying out to the heavens, whispering with deep emotion as they slowly lament their grievances and hatred. The second section intensifies the emotions, revealing the brutality of the enemy and expressing the singer’s grief over the brutal murder of her child, transitioning from

⁴⁴ Wang Yuhua. Analysis and Interpretation of Singing Techniques in the Chinese Art Song "The Yellow River Indignation" [D]. Harbin Normal University, 2021.

outrage to a heart-wrenching sorrow. The third section portrays the Yellow River responding to these cries with a roar, until the next passage, “Tonight...” brings a sense of calm and resolve, as the singer vents her resentment. The final section embodies a determination to fight until the end, fulfilling a long-held aspiration. Chiefly, it underscores the imperative for the enemy to pay for their atrocities. This section is marked by emotional rollercoasters, accompanied by somber notes, evoking a profound sense of sadness amidst raging winds, dark clouds, and the tumultuous Yellow River, all intricately intertwined with the painful emotions, amplifying the sentiments of sorrow and indignation. The emotional trajectory of these four sections, from lamentation and resentment to vengeance, should be naturally and genuinely expressed. Mastering these layers of progression is crucial to embodying the artistic beauty of the song.⁴⁵

3. Artistic Expression in Singing Performance

The artistic expression in singing necessitates singers to possess refined vocal abilities and adjust their singing state accordingly. From the moment the accompaniment music echoes, the performance commences as soon as the singer steps onto the stage. At this juncture, singers must follow the rhythm of the music, immersing themselves in the performance and empathizing with the protagonist's inner turmoil. Regarding the singing performance of “The Yellow River Indignation”, mere singing without the requisite artistic expression would fall short of achieving a captivating stage effect. Firstly, emphasis should be placed on utilizing body language effectively in stage performances. This is achieved through stage gestures, movements, and positioning, harmoniously coordinating music with stage actions. Simple yet intuitive expressions seamlessly integrate with the singing, enhancing the overall performance. In the “The Yellow River Indignation” performance, to convey the profound suffering of the tragic women, singers first lament their unjust fate to the Yellow River, eliciting tears, and ultimately let out a fierce roar, demanding that the enemy repay the blood debt, even if it means sacrificing their lives in the relentless struggle, inspiring the masses to rise up and fight. To add depth and complexity to their performance, singers adjust their gestures accordingly. When expressing sorrow, their gestures are subtle and may tremble slightly, whereas when conveying their unwavering determination to resist, their gestures are broad, firm, and powerful. Secondly, the control of facial expressions during singing is also

⁴⁵ Yang Lijuan. 'Analysis of Emotional Expression in "The Yellow River Indignation"' [J] Northern Music, 2020, 02(04): 91-92

paramount in artistic expression.

The facial expressions vary in accordance with the emotional content of the song. In “The Yellow River Indignation,” the sorrowful cries of women, their resentment towards the injustice of fate, and their unwavering determination to defeat the Japanese invaders must all be conveyed through facial expressions. For instance, while singing the line “no heart,” the eyes should betray intense anger, staring intently ahead as if the enemy stands before them. Immediately following, the line “baby ah... misery” prompts a frown and tears, with the eyes brimming with sorrow as they gaze downwards. Achieving such vivid and authentic expressions enriches the emotional impact of the singing, making it all the more touching and heartfelt. These artistic expressions, in turn, enrich the overall performance, rendering the characters more vivid and lifelike, and providing the audience with an immersive experience.

5.3 Analysis and Utilization of Chinese Contemporary Art Songs

Take “Phoenix Hairpin” and “The Yue Folk’s Song” as examples.

5.3.1 “Phoenix Hairpin”

5.3.1.1 Song Introduction

“Phoenix Hairpin” is an ancient poem penned by poet Lu You in memory of his former wife, Tang Wan. This heart-wrenching masterpiece narrates the tragic love story between Lu You and Tang Wan: Tang Wan, Lu You’s cousin, met as young lovers and regarded each other as their sole support. Unable to bear children, Lu mother forcibly separated the couple. Ultimately, Lu You reluctantly obeyed his mother’s wishes and divorced Tang Wan. Years later, upon revisiting Shen Yuan, Lu You encountered Tang Wan, who was accompanied by her husband. Overwhelmed by years of sorrow and longing, he inscribed “Phoenix Hairpin • Reddish and Soft Hands” on the wall of Shen Yuan. Deeply grieved, Tang Wan revisited Shen Yuan and saw the inscription, her heart shattered with sorrow. In tears, she responded with “Phoenix Hairpin • Worldly Love,” a poignant requiem for their lost love.

5.3.1.2 The Application of Performative Expression and Singing Techniques

1.Utilization of Voice and Breath

When singing “Phoenix Hairpin,” it is crucial to delicately grasp the artistic conception of the ancient poetry song. The volume should be controlled to avoid oversinging, with particular attention paid to the seamless control of breath during the performance. One must master the tones, rhythms, and nuances of the ancient poetry to fully comprehend and convey the unique charm of the work.

The opening line of the poem: “红(hong)酥(su)手(shou), 黄(huang)滕(teng)酒(jiu), 满(man)城(cheng)春(chun)色(se)宫(gong)墙(qiang)柳(liu)” This vividly depicts a couple sharing wine amidst the vibrant spring scenery in Shenyuan Garden. It is a reflection by the poet Lu You on the idyllic past, where the city’s spring romance is boundless, and the green willows by the palace walls exude vitality and hope, painted in bright and harmonious hues. The melody, leaping from high to low, evokes a sense of “sigh” within the listener. When singing this “sigh-like” melody, it is essential to maintain and skillfully control one’s breath, infused with an emotion of reminiscence, to

vividly portray the heart-wrenching “Reddish and Soft Hands.” The poet’s emotions of tenderness, regret, and longing for a long-parted lover gradually unfold through the nuanced control of breath. At the onset of the song, the underlying emotions of helplessness, regret, and sorrow should blend seamlessly with the poetic imagery, requiring a nuanced grasp of the musical theme and emotional palette. Special attention should be given to the initial character “hong.” Start by relaxing your body, adjusting your breath in a positive state, and sing with a sense of “confiding” or “weeping” within your music. Employ a “high position” singing technique to unify your breath, voice, and emotional state, achieving harmony and coherence in your performance. In the lyrics, the words “滕”(teng) “墙”(qiang) ingeniously employ the multi-tone creative approach within a single character, utilizing a cohesive seven-note melody to mimic the musical sensations of “sighing and lamenting,” striving to evoke the depth of inner emotions and impart a more poignant and helpless melodic hue.⁴⁶ As such, during the performance, not only is stable breath support crucial, but also an active and engaged singing stance is necessary. When transitioning to legato phrases, meticulous control and management of breath flow are paramount. Furthermore, the infusion of personal emotion into the musical expression must harmonize with the song’s inherent musical tone. The internal breath movement throughout the body should be natural, even, and continuous. Notably, the notation “poco libero” above the seven-note melody signifies “somewhat freely,” instructing the singer to embody a sense of “sobbing and lamenting” while maintaining breath control, imbuing the performance with a genuine sense of the poet’s melancholy and despair. By adopting the persona of the poet and subtly grasping their emotional state, the singer must maintain an open and receptive posture, facilitating vocal resonance and the unfettered expression of emotion. This approach, akin to an intimate confession, enables the singer to deliver the seven-note melody with clarity and rounded tone, harnessing emotion to amplify the voice, thereby conveying with profound intensity the intricate and ineffable anguish and melancholy that permeate the heart of the poet, Lu You.

Here, we will specifically discuss the singing techniques for six-note and seven-note legato phrases. The technique employed by the author is akin to the

⁴⁶ Liu Linlin: Artistic Characteristics of the Ancient Poetry Song "Phoenix Hairpin" [J]. Contemporary Music, 2020, 04: 61-62

coloratura found in Western Bel canto. When singing these phrases, one cannot merely connect the notes seamlessly; rather, there should be a sense of both continuity and staccato. Special attention should be paid to the flexibility of the coloratura. Avoid opening the mouth too wide when singing, and reduce volume while controlling breathing. Ensure that each note is articulated clearly, while maintaining a steady breath flow and adjusting the intensity and tempo of the performance freely according to the emotion. (See Spectrum example 52)

11

poco libero

1. 红酥手，黄滕酒。
2. 春如旧，人空瘦。

The second line of the poem, “东 (dong)风(feng)恶(e), 欢(huan)情(qing)薄(bo), 一(yi)怀(bei)愁(chou)绪(xu), 几(ji)年(nian)离(li)索(suo),” sees an instantaneous shift in the inner emotions, with sad, sorrowful, and angry emotions bursting forth like a flood, overwhelming the poet’s heart. The pun “Dongfeng e” vividly captures the endless grief and indignation in Lu You’s heart, releasing resentment towards “Dongfeng” through the word “e.” Consequently, singers must, on the basis of breath control, grasp the musical inflection and emotional nuance of “Dongfeng e,” infusing the tone with a sense of weeping and indignation as they portray the “Huanqing Bo” with a series of seven-note runs, thus more intimately blending the poetic scenario with the expression of emotion. (See Spectrum example 53)



In bars 23-28, “A bosom full of sorrow, years of separation,” the emotional intensity of the word “Li” reaches its climax and appears in the form of a six-note “weeping” melody, akin to a brief cadanza, with the range here reaching the highest in the entire song. The melodic palette of the entire work becomes unrestrained and expressive, sad and helpless, expressing the full depth and intricacy of the poet’s inner emotions. When singing, the whole body should be relaxed and open, with the breath remaining stable and coherent. The lower abdomen is gently contracted, the shoulders relaxed, and the back open. With the support of the lower back, the breath flows swiftly and concentratedly through the six-note melody. The volume gradually builds as emotions are expressed, guided by the presence of free extension marks, reaching its fullest strength in the song. Following this, the phrase is repeated, transitioning from grief and anger to a profound sense of helplessness, with the breath’s momentum unbroken. Simultaneously, for vocal resonance, the body’s resonant cavities should be fully harnessed to enhance and convey the profound grief and musical inflections embodied in Lu You’s lyrics throughout the phrase.

Spectrum

example

54

:

25 愁 绪, 几 年 离
虽 在, 锦 书 难

28 索, 一 怀 愁 绪, 几 年
托, 山 盟 虽 在, 锦 书

At the conclusion of the song, there are three consecutive instances of the word “wrong”, carrying profound thoughts that transition into the next section. Despite the similarity in melody, the poetry conveys deeper emotional and psychological suffering and sorrow. When singing, attention must be paid to creating a sharp contrast with the musical color expressed in the previous section of the song, and the control and utilization of breath should be more active, stable, and intense, with a balance between tension and relaxation. Finally, a heartfelt, elongated sigh – “Mo! Mo! Mo...” The pitch here rises by an octave, deeply reflecting the indescribable sorrow within the heart of the poet Lu You, and the sadness bursts forth. While singing this phrase, maintain an inhaling state during exhalation, allowing the breath to vibrate the vocal cords. Each

“Mo” is sung as a high, soft note, akin to a long sigh of grief. This delicate handling does not involve relaxing the entire body but rather intensifying the internal bodily mechanisms' confrontation, making the control more cautious and flexible, achieving a weakness that is not hollow and a relaxation that is not lax. Particularly, the final “Mo” should be slightly elongated, carrying a sense of “sigh”, to more accurately express the poet's grief and indignation at the irreparable fate of the two individuals within the feudal society, conveying a sadness in the heart and indignation in the tone.⁴⁷

Spectrum example 55:

The musical score is written in Western staff notation. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 33-37) has a vocal line with lyrics '离 索。 错! 错! 错! 莫!' and a piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 38-41) has a vocal line with lyrics '莫! 莫!' and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes triplets and a final sustained chord.

2. Language in Singing - Handling Diction and Rhyme

To excel in singing Chinese works with bel canto, we must meticulously hone our language skills. By incorporating the nuances of Chinese language with bel canto singing techniques, we aim to render each character’s pronunciation and tone in the song

⁴⁷ Liu Xiaona: An Analysis of the Singing of the Ancient Poetry Art Song 'Phoenix Hairpin' [J]. Drama House, 2020, 22:

with utmost clarity and precision. Our goal is not merely to ensure comprehension but to evoke the profound emotions embedded within the lyrics. While Italian is often hailed as the most vocal-friendly language, we can still draw inspiration from its vowels “a, e, i, o, u” during vocalization exercises, while also varying them and emphasizing the significance of consonants. This approach enhances vocal comfort and clarifies Articulation. Given the intricacies of the Chinese pronunciation system, achieving impeccable diction and rhyme necessitates a keen focus on three essential aspects: the “word head” (initial consonant), “word belly” (vowel nucleus), and “word tail” (final consonant or vowel). Before performing, emotionally reciting the work "Phoenix Hairpin" familiarizes us with the rhythm, cadences, and rhyme patterns of ancient poetry. This enables us to discern where emphasis should lie and where to lighten our touch, ensuring a seamless transition between the word head, belly, and tail. Each word must be fully rhymed, with a natural flow that avoids superficiality.

Take, for instance, the opening line “Reddish and Soft Hands.” When singing the first word “shou” (red), to prevent the vowel “ong” from sounding nasal, we gently articulate the initial consonant, positioning it forward for clarity, then swiftly and accurately transition into the vowel “ong”. The vowel should be pronounced smoothly and with resonance, while the jaw remains relaxed to facilitate a natural singing posture. Similarly, for the word “shou” (hand), with its initial “sh”, vowel “o”, and final “u”, we emphasize the initial consonant, introduce the vowel immediately after, prolong the vowel “o” for emphasis, and conclude with a crisp final consonant. Maintaining coherence throughout the word's components ensures harmony between the word and its timbre.

The third tones of “hand” and “wine” should be emphasized when singing, with particular focus on the initials “sh” and “j”. After pronouncing the initials, emphasis should be placed on transitioning smoothly to the finals “ou” and “iu”, reinforcing the third tone effect, which facilitates the grasp of the emotional tone. The melody of the closed vowel “Li” employs six consecutive notes, reaching the highest range of the entire song, vividly portraying the poet’s inner turmoil and indignation. Singers should adopt a technique of singing with a narrow initial sound and expanding into a wider vowel sound. Pay attention to elongating the vowel “i” and transitioning smoothly towards “a”, relaxing the throat and opening the jaw. Avoid lifting the larynx due to pronunciation, and ensure swift breath support, thus conveying the poet’s unspoken,

heart-wrenching emotions vividly and emotionally within the melody's hues of freedom, indignation, and sorrow.

3. Grasp of Emotion

The work “Phoenix Hairpin” revolves around Lu You’s tragic love story, a tale that haunted him for a lifetime and left him with eternal regret. Unable to control his marriage or alter the cruel feudal social system, Lu You poured his sorrow, grief, and indignation into unavailing poems. His steadfast love for Tang Wan has become an eternal masterpiece. Prior to singing, it is imperative to grasp the “main melody” of the ancient poetry’s emotional tone—helplessness, pain, regret, indignation, and lamentation. This emotion feels like a rock, yet finds no outlet for expression. During the performance, emphasize enriching its expressive quality, paying close attention to subtle shifts in inner mood and tone. Avoid neglecting the nuanced grasp and handling of each word, syllable, and note’s emotional experience. This not only intensifies the expressive quality of the “main melody” but also renders the poetic image rich and complete, deepening the theme’s poignancy and emotional impact. “The east wind is cruel, joy fleeting, a heart laden with sorrow, years of separation, wrong, wrong, wrong.” This verse portrays the heartrending scene where Lu’s mother ruthlessly separates a loving couple. The poet’s cherished fantasies are swept away by this relentless east wind, leaving only boundless anguish and sorrow within. The singer must delve into the author’s heart, feeling and embracing this profound sorrow. On the surface, tranquility prevails, yet within, a tempest of emotions rages. Each “wrong” is enunciated with deliberate pauses, conveying helpless sighs, lamentations, and cries: Whose fault is this? Was it wrong? The first “wrong” embodies the poet’s profound regret and mournful sigh, followed by the second, a heartfelt question, and the third, a stark realization of helplessness against the cruel feudal society. Constrained by his mother, the poet resigns himself to the harsh reality, acknowledging, “It was indeed wrong!” In the latter half of the poem, “Spring remains as before, yet people waste away; Tears stain the silk, red and soaking through,” the mood shifts drastically from nostalgic memories of bygone days to the cruel present. It seems as if Tang Wan herself is lamenting the changes in her marriage, which have left her emaciated. In the final four lines, “Peach blossoms fade, the idle pool pavilion stands; Though oaths remain, letters are hard to send, Mo, mo, mo,”

the withering peach blossoms and desolate Shen Garden symbolize the transience of things and the enduring sorrow. The poet's heart is consumed by remorse and pain, his tone solemn as he sings of the impossible task of entrusting his feelings. The word "Tuo" encapsulates his inner turmoil, helplessness, and unwavering love. The three "mo's" conclude the piece in a heartrending sigh, requiring the singer to convey a desolate, intense, and emotionally resonant performance that truly encapsulates the profound sorrow of the poem.

4. Singing Aesthetics: The Harmonious Unity of "Poetry, Music, and Essence"

In the performance of the ancient poetry art song "Phoenix Hairpin," the singer must not only master the melody on the score but also respect the original work by accurately grasping the aesthetics of the ancient poetry, thereby capturing the vivid imagery and profound mood of the song. During the performance, the singer must embody empathy, conveying the artistic conception inherent within the song's lyrics. The upper and lower sections of the ancient poem "Phoenix Hairpin" exhibit a stark contrast in emotional intensity, with the composer employing Western harmonic minor to infuse the song with a melancholic and sorrowful melody. Furthermore, the ingenious use of overlapping sounds at the conclusion intensifies and elevates the underlying tone of despair and helplessness, endowing the song with even deeper significance. As a professional singer, it is crucial to first comprehend and recognize the nuanced emotional shifts embedded in the poetry as the focal point of one's performance. Secondly, one must grasp the essence of the work, delicately balancing the harmony between the mood and the song's artistic conception, ensuring that the expression of the song's inner emotions seamlessly integrates with the lyrics. Lastly, during the performance, the singer must immerse themselves in the scene, allowing their emotions to guide their voice. Amidst the evocative melody and emotionally charged accompaniment, the singer must vividly portray the poet's irreparable sense of helplessness. "Poetry and music" rely on each other, achieving a perfect fusion that showcases their unique aesthetic artistic conception. By harmoniously unifying their emotional rendering with the sublimation of the song's essence, singers further deepen the musical theme, revealing the beauty of ancient poetry's artistic conception and enriching the aesthetic value of ancient poetry art songs. In the interpretation of ancient poetry songs, the seamless blend of "poetry and music" creates a musical artistic

conception imbued with aesthetic significance, distinct from Western arias. Singing such works necessitates an understanding of the creative intent and the embedded artistic conception. Ultimately, as the second creator, the singer must use the “emotional keynote” within the work as a bridge to connect with the lyricist and composer, engaging in an emotional dialogue that transcends time and space. By integrating skilled techniques with rich musical expression, the singer delves deeper into the aesthetic realm crafted by the composer and poet, accurately and subtly conveying the artistic conception and emotional beauty of the art song. This harmonious unity of “poetry, music, and essence” profoundly interprets the unique implications and artistic value of the work.

5.3.2 “The Yue Folk Song”

Taking the singing of light lyric tenor Shi Yijie as an example

5.3.2.1 Introduction

Song Introduction

“The Yue Folk Song” is a poem from the pre-Qin period. The original text is in ancient Yue language and is of considerable length. The poem depicts the love and admiration of the Yue boatmen for Chu's disciple Zi Xi during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. When the drum music ceases, the boatman embraces his twin oars and sings affectionately to Zi Xi. Unable to comprehend due to the language barrier, Zi Xi had it translated into Chu language, which later evolved into this poem. On the one hand, the Yue people admire the prince and are thrilled at the prospect of cruising with him; on the other hand, they are acutely aware of the class divide and the realities that prevent them from being together. Thus, the poetry embodies the Yue people's complex emotions of hesitation and indecision, yet also conveys their unwavering determination to express their feelings to the prince. Liu Qing, a modern young composer, set music to this poem, while the pianist Deng Yao and art director Bai Dongliang arranged the piano accompaniment for it, transforming it into a modern art song work.

1. Introduction of Shi Yijie

Shi Yijie, born in Shanghai in 1982, is a young singer residing in Europe. He has

garnered numerous gold medals in international vocal music competitions, specializing in the vocal works of Mozart, Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti, and is widely recognized as a light lyric tenor in the vocal music industry. Currently, he is one of the most popular tenors among China's younger generation. Upon returning to China, in order to promote Chinese culture, Shi Yijie has dedicated himself to the dissemination of Chinese art songs, frequently performing early Chinese art songs on international stages and at concerts. In recent years, his renditions of Chinese art songs have reached textbook levels, such as “The River Flows Eastward”, “I Live by the Yangtze River”, “Lyrics of Red Beans”, “Three Wishes for a Rose,” and “Homesickness,” eliciting enthusiastic responses from the vocal music community. By integrating the singing techniques of German and Austrian art songs he learned in the West with the vocal characteristics and singing styles of Chinese characters, he has explored a new path for singing Chinese songs.

5.3.2.2 The Utilization of Performative Expression and Singing Techniques

1. Voice and Vocals

(1) Voice Characteristics

Throughout the concert, Shi Yijie’s voice is beautiful and gentle, as if he is “telling” a story through his singing. In contrast to the mainstream pursuit of loudness among domestic vocal performers, he places greater emphasis on the naturalness of his voice, which is unforced, fluid, and full of emotion. Despite its moderate volume, his voice is firm and powerful, with every word clearly audible. During emotional climaxes, his voice pierces through with strength, resonating at a high position and maintaining stability. Shi Yijie does not deliberately intensify his breathing or increase his air intake and output; instead, his throat remains relaxed. He has found a harmonious balance between breath and vocal cords, ensuring the stable and linear delivery of his voice lines. His voice embodies the sound type characteristics of Western Bel canto, yet it sounds distinctly Chinese, comforting, and deeply emotional.

(2) The Utilization of Embellished Vocal Cavity

The melodies in “The Yue Folk’s Song” extensively employ minor second portamento, embodying the musical element of “embellished vocal cavity” in Chinese folk music. For instance, in the lyrics “Qian Zhou Zhong Liu,” both “Zhou” and “Zhong” are adorned with appoggiatura for embellishment. When Shi Yijie tackles these, he

incorporates the coloratura techniques from Western Bel canto, sustaining his voice through swift abdominal breath propulsion. The upper register remains stable, rendering the phrase naturally serene, breathy, yet deeply emotional. Evidently, Shi Yijie's innate light lyric tenor timbre imparts a soft and melodious quality to his voice, further augmented by targeted scientific vocalization methods, enhancing both the penetration and expressiveness of his singing.

2. Analysis of Singing Techniques

The light lyric tenor boasts a bright and resplendent timbre, albeit with a relatively modest volume. To ensure that his voice resonates throughout every corner of the concert hall, Shi Yijie relies on the dimensionality generated by resonance. During the live rendition of "The Yue Folk's Song," Shi Yijie's voice is exquisite, clear, and powerful, audible even to distant audience members. This is attributable to both his inherent timbre and the concentrated, stable resonance achieved in the high register.

When singing the opening line "What's going on this evening," with numerous "xi" sounds and focusing on the "i" vowel, he sings with exceptional naturalness, pronouncing words very clearly, yet lacking in strength. Every word he utters maintains a stable position, emanating from a single focal point, creating a "buzzing" sensation in the audience's minds, as if the entire concert hall is filled with sound. By observing Shi Yijie's relaxed and effortless singing movements and expressions, it becomes evident that achieving high resonance is not deliberate but rather the harmonious result of relaxed muscles working in unison. At this point, the voice is projected upwards towards the high resonance, forming a seamless and circular vocal system, resulting in a naturally transparent and resonant sound.⁴⁸

Spectrum example 56:

⁴⁸ Ren Qiao. *Shi Yijie's Aesthetics of Voice and Works in Singing* [D]. Changsha: Hunan Normal University, 2018



3. Vocal Delivery - Handling Pronunciation Variations

Shi Yijie initially gained fame in the music industry for his performances in Western operas. In an interview, he admitted that he had not systematically studied bel canto for interpreting Chinese works, but instead drew inspiration from the singing techniques of German and Austrian art songs, including Articulation, vowel and consonant production, and dynamic shading to express musical nuances. When practicing Chinese songs, he translates the characters into pinyin, then consults a dictionary to meticulously consider the pronunciation of each vowel and consonantal sound, as well as the final rhyme patterns. He believes that adopting certain techniques from German and Austrian art songs to sing Chinese works is a commendable approach.

When performing Chinese ancient poetry art songs, singers often borrow from the traditional Chinese opera's methods of Articulation and rhyme. The pronunciation in these genres is primarily divided into initials and finals, whereas the vocal delivery in German and Austrian art songs is structured around vowels (also known as mother sounds) and consonants. Misapplication of these techniques in the transition process can potentially lead to muddy vocal sounds and unclear Articulation.

Shi Yijie skillfully integrated the initials of Chinese with the vowels in German and

Austrian languages, achieving remarkable results by adhering to timely rhyming according to the verse endings. For instance, in the first musical section, the frequently occurring character “兮” (xi), with its initial consonant “x” and vowel “i”, poses a challenge. However, Shi Yijie expertly articulated the crisp “x” and sustained the vowel “i” with a forward voice placement, lips slightly pursed, and tongue tip touching the lower teeth. This “i” sound resonated throughout the body, showcasing his mastery. Similarly, the handling of “舟” (zhou) and “流” (liu) in “Qian Zhou Zhong Liu” follows this pattern, culminating in a clear "o" sound, akin to the vowel in German and Austrian pronunciation, where lips are gently rounded and tongue tip does not touch the lower teeth, ensuring a subtle opening for the final rhyme. In the second section, the character “山” (shan), with its initial “sh” and vowel “an”, can easily be mispronounced as “sha” if the mouth movement is exaggerated. Yet, Shi Yijie employed Bel canto techniques, emphasizing the vowel “a” with breath control while allowing the “an” to softly accompany, thus avoiding the harshness that can often mar the beauty of the “an” sound. This demonstrates that adopting Western vowel production methods is indeed a prudent choice when interpreting Chinese vocal works.⁴⁹

Spectrum example 57:

⁴⁹ Xu Deshi, an exploration of the light lyric tenor's interpretation of Chinese songs, exemplified by Shi Yijie's Chinese art song concert "The Yue Folk's Song" [J]. Guiyang Art Evaluation, 2022

25
山 有 木 兮 木 有 枝, 心 悦 君 兮 君 不

26
知。 山 有 木 兮 木 有 枝,

27
心 悦 君 兮 君 不 知, 心 悦 君 兮 君 不 知。

31

Certainly, while borrowing from others is one aspect, adhering to traditional Articulation methods can better convey the essence of the work. In Chinese singing, emphasis is placed on “clear pronunciation and rounded tone,” which necessitates attention to both the “initial consonant” and the “final consonant.” For instance, in the second bar, the characters “枝” (zhī) and “知” (zhī) both begin with the initial consonant “zh.” When pronouncing this sound, it’s crucial to control the degree of tongue rolling; too far forward may result in sounding like “j,” while too far back can lead to throat constriction. When Shi Yijie tackles these characters, he maintains a stable vocal position while reasonably relaxing his tongue position. He places emphasis on the initial consonant, then gradually draws in the vowel “i” to conclude the syllable, ensuring a clear initial and a crisp ending, thereby achieving the desired “clear pronunciation and rounded tone.”

4. Emotion Control

When singing the first sentence “Jin Xi He Xi Jin Xi Ye,” Shi Yijie focused on the word “Xi”. It can be clearly felt that he controlled his breath here and enhanced the push effect, thus making the overtones more prominent. In this way, it more aptly captures the beautiful artistic conception of rowing with a beautiful woman on the rippling waters, setting the tone for the entire song. When handling the “Xi” in the second sentence “Jin Ri He Ri Xi,” he deliberately lengthened and gradually weakened the volume at the end of the word, fully showcasing the bright timbre of his light lyric tenor, thereby expressing the lingering emotions and joy of being with the beloved. In the phrase “Meng Xiu Pi Hao Xi,” Shi Yijie sang with even more openness, further intensifying the mood. “Bu Zi Gou Chi” suddenly softened in volume, revealing an inner sense of embarrassment. For “Xin Ji Fan, Er Bu Jue Xi,” Shi Yijie deliberately lingered and emphasized the word “Jue,” filling his singing with richer breath. “De Zhi Wang Zi” then abruptly returned to calm, with the volume diminishing. The interplay between movement and stillness, strong and weak, vividly portrays the inner turmoil and uncertainty.

At the climax, “Shan You Mu Xi Mu You Zhi, Xin Yue Jun Xi Jun Bu Zhi,” Shi Yijie incorporated hand gestures, and his breath control reached its peak. The word “Shan” was clear and powerful, fully conveying the surging emotions within. “Xin Yue Jun Xi Jun Bu Zhi,” Shi Yijie furrowed his brows, slowly narrating, expressing his inner reluctance to accept reality. After the interlude, repeating this phrase, Shi Yijie's singing gradually regained rationality, tending towards calmness. This portrays an image of a Yue person who, despite feelings of helplessness, recognizes reality and returns to a normal life. Shi Yijie leverages the vocal advantages of his light lyric tenor, skillfully utilizing breath and resonance. Through the juxtaposition of strength and the harmony of movement and stillness, he closely follows the theme, fully revealing the love for the prince and the unwillingness to accept reality in the hearts of the Yue people.

Conclusion

Having been engaged in vocal music learning and performance for years, I have been striving to address a vocal music challenge: how to render Chinese vocal music more naturally and captivatingly, so that it can be embraced and appreciated by both Chinese and foreign vocal music enthusiasts. This pertains to the concept of integrating Chinese and Western singing styles. The Chinese and foreign tracks that this paper focuses on are also featured in my CD recordings. The paper primarily analyzes these tracks in terms of singing techniques and performative expression, elucidating the practical application of Western Bel Canto singing techniques within the works, and exploring how to incorporate Western scientific singing techniques and artistic expression into Chinese art songs.

Although Chinese and Western vocal music art possess their distinct characteristics and strengths, they are interconnected in singing techniques, music expression, music aesthetics, and other facets, allowing for mutual learning and joint contributions to the flourishing of contemporary vocal music art worldwide. This research holds significant value for vocal performers, educators, learners, and enthusiasts alike. Both Western elegant classical vocal music and Chinese vocal music evolve with time and will become increasingly popular. The integration of Chinese and Western vocal music represents a trend in the development of Chinese vocal music, offering guidance in enhancing the singing proficiency and appreciation abilities of vocal music practitioners and enthusiasts. Furthermore, we aspire for Chinese vocal music works to reach a wider audience of foreign vocal music enthusiasts and spectators, thereby fostering the exchange and research of Chinese and foreign vocal music cultures.

From the perspective of new vocal music theory, this paper takes the singing concept of integrating Chinese and Western vocal music as its central theme and identifies three innovative aspects through an in-depth analysis of selected classical vocal music pieces: Firstly, the diversification of the integration, encompassing nationality, artistry, and polyphony; Secondly, the application of the integration concept in the performative expression of works, utilizing five essential elements: voice, emotion, language, performance, and aesthetics; Lastly, the technical application of the integration concept in singing Chinese songs.

The concise phrase “Sing what like what,” consisting of just six words,

encapsulates the essence of vocal music performance art, which is also the requirement set by my mentor for me. In the face of the ongoing interplay between Chinese and Western cultures, we should better inherit and develop the tradition while embracing and showcasing the unique charm of vocal music art. Admittedly, there are significant differences between Chinese and Western vocal music art, but we must strive to refine and enhance it with sufficient ideas and techniques. Additionally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my mentor for the invaluable assistance and guidance in singing techniques and thesis ideas. This paper proposes how to utilize the concept of integrating Chinese and Western vocal music to better execute the performance of vocal music works. I hope that through this discussion, I can receive feedback from my predecessors and make necessary corrections, paving the way for my future endeavors.

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