

# Henri Duparc's Art Songs in the Teaching of French Art Songs in China

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## Abstract

Henri Duparc, who was one of César Franck's students, was a famous French composer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially famous for his French art songs. He created more than 100 pieces in his life, because he had very high requirements for his own works and destroyed those he was not satisfied with. In the end, only 16 vocal art songs were retained. Compared with the French composers of the same period such as G. Fauré and C. Debussy, the number of Duparc's vocal music works is only a fraction, but he was as famous as these two composers in the field of French art songs. His songs are deep in feeling and rich in artistic influence, such as the nostalgic "Song of Melancholy (*Chanson triste*)", the plaintive "Sighs (*Soupir*)", and the subtle and affectionate "Longing (*Extase*)", the latter being somewhat modelled on R. Wagner in harmony. "Rothermund's Manor (*Le manoir de Rosemonde*)" is a dramatic, strong, distinctive style of work; "Phidylé" is an imitation of a medieval ballad, originally written for mezzo-soprano, with three sections and one overlapping song, the overlapping song is the dominant motif of the whole piece, and its repetition suggests that the mistress of the castle has spent the whole night from sunset and moonrise to dawn waiting for her beloved. Duparc's most perfect songs are "Invitation to a Journey (*L'invitation au voyage*)" and "The previous life (*La vie antérieure*)", composed in C. Baudelaire's poem, which are full of oriental coloured fantasies and longing for a peaceful life.

**Keywords:** Henri Duparc; Art Songs; Teaching; French Art Songs; China

## Introduction

Henri Casalis (1840-1909) was a French physician, symbolist poet and literary figure who wrote under the pen names Jean Caselli and Jean Lahore. Duparc's three art songs, Sad song (*Chanson triste*), Extase (*Extase*) and Florentine serenade (*Sérénade florentine*) all chose his poem of the same name. Gretchen Ostberg, notes that the text of Extase reflects a profound, inward appropriation or an absolute peace; a peace so sweet it resembles nonexistence. It processes an extraordinary tranquility and emotion or blissful repose. The intensity or the emotion is so overpowering that the poet is unable to complete his thought, i.e., "death... beloved ... death ...." Human words are incapable of expressing such rapture; it can only be felt. Sad Song (*Chanson triste*) has for its text a poem by Jean Lahor, a Symbolist poet whose natural pessimism led him to Oriental philosophies and the conviction that all was vanity. This poem, despite its title and the predilections of its author, does offer the hope that perhaps love can cure the suffering poet.

## **Henri Duparc's art songs**

### **Study of the lyrics of Duparc's art songs**

The lyricist of *Soupir* is Sully-Prudhomme (1839-1907), was a scientist as well as a French poet and the first winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1901. This unusual combination of talents produced a lucid, transparent style, free of affectation. His poetry tends to be intimate, personal and direct. G. Fauré also liked to use his poems for compositions such as *Waterside*(*Au bord de l'eau*), *Down here*(*Ici-bas*), and *The cradles* (*Les Berceaux*).

Angélica Minero Escobar (2023) in his article "Anywhere Out of the World": Escapism in Baudelaire-Duparc's "L'Invitation au voyage", notes that More than a generation separated poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1868) from composer Henri Duparc, yet the personal and artistic lives of these two men were destined to become interconnected. Although they never met, Duparc, the creator of some of the most beautiful melodies ever written, would always admire the book of the poet. He would set two of Baudelaire's poems from the first part of his *L'Invitation du voyage* (1870) and *La vie antérieure* (1884) with a preternatural understanding of the poet's intent. Never again would Baudelaire's poetry be set with such perfect sensitivity or direct exactness, though other important French composers of the time, such as C. Debussy and G. Faure, would later make the attempt.

### **Songwriting characteristics of Duparc's art songs**

In her master's thesis "A preliminary study of the harmonic technique of Duparc's art songs", Huang Lin (2014) of the Nanjing Arts Institute analyses Duparc's existing art songs from the point of view of the harmonic technique, and researches how Duparc uses the traditional harmonic language while breaking free of the traditional harmonic constraints to the greatest extent possible, so as to better grasp the characteristics of the French art songs in the second half of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, the harmonic progression and its role in musical expression are examined in terms of the use of colourful chordal oppositions, terminations, sustained tones, unexpected progressions, parallel progressions, the use of alternating chord changes, and chromaticism. On the other hand, the study of modal tonality and musical expression is based on the two aspects of tonal choice and tonal layout.

Wu Yun (2014) takes G. Fauré's *Waterside*(*Au bord de l'eau*, Op. 8, No. 1) and H. Duparc's *Melancholy Song* (*Chanson triste*, IHD 4) as the research object, and analyses and compares the stylistic characteristics of the two composers' musical works from six aspects: introduction of lyrics, analysis of the structure of the piece, musical characteristics, the use of harmony, the key points of singing and the piano accompaniment part. Fauré's music style is fresh, elegant, soft and delicate, and is good at descriptive music language, while Duparc's music style is more dramatic and emotional, through the combination of colourful harmonic changes and changes of strength and speed, reflecting the side of giving music emotional rendering. Fauré's music style is fresh and elegant, soft and delicate, good at descriptive music language, while Duparc's music style is more dramatic and emotional, through the combination of colourful harmonic changes and tempo changes, reflecting the side of giving music emotional rendering.

Duparc's teacher, C. Franck, was "a major figure in giving French music a new seriousness and solid technique", and advocated strict classical compositional rules. Under his influence, the young Duparc, from the very beginning of his career, had a deep-seated disdain for the light and danceable works of the French Second Empire, and held a starkly negative attitude towards the salon song style, a sentiment that became clearer and more determined during the reign of Napoleon III, and especially after the Franco-Prussian War. The tendency of his creative thinking and the rebellion of his artistic style laid down Duparc's artistic path and opened the door to the art hall for him to fulfil his ambitions. From then on, he became obsessed with the old stanza-based romantic songs, and aspired to create works that were deep in thought and liberated from pretence (Zhou, 2011).

In 1869, Duparc went to Munich to attend some performances, where he met Liszt, who introduced him to R. Wagner, who became Duparc's idol from then on, and thus Wagner's music influenced his compositions. Duparc's compositions became more dramatic and symphonic. Because the initial development of French art song was influenced by German art song, which made Duparc inspired by German art song, and had inexpressible praise for Germany, he regarded German music as the source of contemporary music; but this also led to the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, he felt that he had abandoned his country, strong self-reproach made him unable to extricate himself, which eventually led to his incurable mental illness in 1885, and he was unable to stop himself. In 1885, he suffered from an incurable mental illness and gave up writing, but he was still able to maintain a normal life with his wife and family. Duparc is known for his songwriting, and all his songs are written in the words of famous contemporary French writers, with original phrases, inspirational melodies, deep emotions, and infectious art, and the music reflects the wonderful connotations and essence of the lyrics, which can be described as meticulous understanding of the lyrics, and the perfect harmony of the context, which is a model of poetic meaning. His art songs are cherished by cultivated vocalists, and his songs can only be sung by singers with a high degree of musicianship, and his accompaniments are beyond the capacity of ordinary pianists.

### **Singing technique and singing style mastery of Duparc's Art Songs**

The vocal music professor of Nanjing Normal University, Shen Jie (2009) notes that Duparc's art songs are rich in subject matter and varied in musical style. In his compositions he maintains the passionate, free and energetic expression of the Romantic vitality of expression of the Romantics, while making strong use of chromaticisation, variations and dissonant chords to express love, eulogy and lamentation that The use of chromaticism and dissonant chords to express love, eulogy and lamentation creates changes in harmony and colour, and evokes musical moods and sensations. Although Duparc has been accused of imitating Wagner, his use of melody, chromatisation, tonal arrangement and tonalisation, tonal arrangement and treatment of the lyrics all show their own characteristics. It can be said that Duparc is a composer who expresses the "beauty and profundity" of a song to its fullest extent. and profundity" in his songs.

Sun Yufeng (2010) starts from the historical background of Duparc's French art song creation, and after explaining Duparc's life and creative experience, then discusses the singing characteristics of Duparc's art songs: the voice should be coherent and smooth, pay attention to the voice of the soft rise, delicate and rigorous, control the voice, and accurately grasp the emotions.

Zhou Yihan (2020), through reviewing a large amount of literature about Duparc and his art songs, takes the art song *Going to the place where the war took place* (*Au pays où se fait la guerre*, IHD 1) as the main research object. After understanding the creative background of the French art song "To the place where the war took place", she analysed the details of the musical style characteristics and the structure of the song in three aspects: lyrics and melody, piano accompaniment and vocals, and analysis of the harmonic pattern, and concluded the singing style characteristics of this art song.

Wang Xiaozhong (2020) notes that the melody of Fauré's art songs is smooth and beautiful, the structure is neat and well-proportioned, and the style is delicate and elegant; Debussy's art songs are very dreamy, with a unique musical vocabulary, which is typical of the French impressionist music. On the basis of the musical vocabulary inherited from his predecessors in French composition, Duparc used his own keen perception to capture the new direction of the world's music development at that time (especially Wagner's music creation concept), coupled with his own interest in other fields of art (e.g., painting, dance, oriental art and culture) and the wide range of French poems, which gradually formed a new type of music vocabulary of the Duparc style. His songs are "equally elegant and refined but more affecting, with lyrics full of reflections on life, with the poetic lyricism of an art song, but also with the tension of theatre".

Jiang Shan (2022), Associate Professor of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music Dalian Branch, pointed out in his paper "the aesthetic characteristics of Duparc's art songs and the aesthetic pursuit of the singer" that: firstly, highlighting the dramatic, highlighting the high style. When singing Duparc's dramatic vocal works, it is important to capture the overall singing structure, voice brightness, tone levels as much as possible, and try to express the romantic feelings and qualities of Duparc's early creations, i.e. to be atmospheric and self-assured, to show the sensibility without being indiscriminate, and to be delicate without losing the nobility, and to put in place the drama that the songs and poems are trying to express. Secondly, the power of emotion should be renewed and the audio-visual effect should be strengthened. Duparc's songs can be sung in both medium-sized chamber concert halls and large concert halls. In order to increase the audio-visual effect, a brief and concise introduction to the song should be included. In the specific singing process, to enhance the audio-visual effect, the singers also need to express their emotional power.

### **Piano accompaniment processing for Duparc's art songs**

Piano accompaniment for French art songs is a close partner of vocal singing, just like German and Austrian art songs, and has the same important status. Accurately expressing the composer's creative intention, correctly grasping the musical style, and completing the interpretation of the work together with the voice are crucial to a good piano accompaniment of French art songs. To excel in the accompaniment of French art songs, it is not enough to have excellent piano playing skills, but you also need to master the knowledge of vocal

singing, how to combine the piano part with the poem, how to create an artistic mood for the song with a specific musical language and form, the characteristics of French pronunciation, French history and culture, etc., and to have a comprehensive artistic qualities.

In his master's thesis "The Embodiment of French Art Song Music Style in Piano Accompaniment--Taking Henri Duparc's *An invitation to travel* (*L'invitation au voyage*) and other three French art songs as an Example", Wang Bin (2015) analyses and researches the style of French art songs, and the piano accompaniment of French art songs, taking Duparc's *An invitation to travel* and other three works as an example. Including the analysis of harmonic colours, melodies, patterns, structures and other techniques, the style of French art songs and how it is reflected in the piano accompaniment are summarized, how the piano accompaniment can better express the complete mood of the art song, and how it can co-operate with the singer to achieve the best performance and accurately reflect the musical style of the French art song.

Wang Yanni (2009) analysed the music and piano accompaniment of Duparc's vocal works based on the poems *An invitation to travel* (*L'invitation au voyage*) and *Past Lives* (*la vie antérieure*) by Baudelaire, a famous poet at that time. After analysing the morphology of the two art songs (three aspects: compositional structure, harmony and tonality, and melody), and the relationship between the music and the poems, she elaborated on and drew conclusions from the four aspects of accompaniment patterns, harmonic progression, inner melody, and the ending part. It is believed that Duparc's piano accompaniment for art songs is more beautiful and touching compared to the simple creation of 18th century French romantic songs, not only describing the beauty of love, but also the beauty of sadness and loneliness, and absorbing the creation technique of German art song team accompaniment, attaching importance to the creation of piano accompaniment, and more delicate discovery of the poem's connotation and meaning, and using richer harmonic colours to express the meaning of the poem, which is of the French romantic nobility and the creation of the perfect combination of narration and lyricism, which is more suitable for the performance of the poems.

## **Teaching of Art Songs in China**

### **The Current Situation of Vocal Music Teaching of Chinese Art Songs in China**

After the May Fourth Movement in 1919 in China, the genre of art song was gradually introduced to China along with BELCANTO vocal singing. At that time, a group of composers who had studied Western compositional techniques returned to China and composed a number of high-value Chinese art songs based on Chinese poetry. After more than one hundred years of development, Chinese art songs have gradually freed themselves from the constraints of traditional Western compositional techniques, and slowly formed their own unique artistic characteristics: for example, the melody of national tunes, the dialect of local characteristics, and so on. Chinese art songs occupy an important position in the Chinese vocal music teaching repertoire.

Among the Chinese art songs, Chinese ancient poetry art song occupies a large proportion, which is based on the vocabulary of ancient Chinese classic poems, with newly created music compilation, creating a brand-new art form combining music art and literature art. This form is very popular among the audience and is of great significance in the inheritance and promotion of Chinese culture.

Starting from the textual analysis and research of singing, and the treatment of voice on the basis of the works, singing professor of Shenyang Conservatory of Music aims to provide a summary of the experience in ancient poems and art songs for the all-round teaching of vocal singing in China by combining with the teaching practice of vocal singing majors in music and art colleges in the past years.

Taking the singing of "Night Poetry on the Maple Bridge" as an example, explores the guiding role of learning to sing Chinese ancient poems and art songs in vocal music teaching; points out the positive teaching significance of singing Chinese ancient poems and art songs in vocal music teaching; explores the positive influence of singing Chinese ancient poems and art songs on children and youth's music education; and spreads the role of traditional Chinese poems, so as to bring more attention to the appreciation and learning of Chinese ancient poems and art songs. This will make people pay more attention to the appreciation and learning of Chinese ancient poems and art songs.

Due to the gradual increase of the influence of Chinese ancient poetry and art songs in the society, some colleges and universities have begun to carry out the teaching activities of ancient poetry and art songs, and actively explore the way of its integration with vocal music teaching, combines the teaching status quo of ancient poems and art songs in colleges and universities, and explores the specific strategies of ancient poems and art songs and vocal music teaching in colleges and universities from the three aspects of college and university teaching resources, teachers' teaching level and vocal music teaching forms.

Chinese poetry and art song is a representative form of Chinese music, rooted in the soil of traditional Chinese culture, and is a product of the collision between traditional Chinese music and poetry and Western art. Chinese ancient poems and art songs are very nurturing factors, digging deep into the educational value contained therein and scientifically applying it to teaching practice is not only an inevitable requirement to improve the professional ability of music students, but also an inevitable choice to enhance their humanistic literacy, aesthetic consciousness and promote the national spirit. In view of this, analyzes the educational value contained in Chinese ancient poems and art songs, and analyzes its specific application in teaching practice, which is of high reference value.

Corresponding to Chinese ancient poetry art songs, Chinese modern art songs are another important branch in the field of Chinese art songs. The origin of Chinese modern art songs is a large number of young people with ideals initiated to propagate positive and correct ideas, and the music programs widely circulated in the society, fully mobilizing the development achievements of modern Chinese art songs. The rapid development of China's modern art songs has laid a solid foundation for the prosperity of art, and it is important to explore the artistic value of these songs and utilize these valuable artistic resources in the process of teaching in colleges and universities to support the cultivation of artistic skills and artistic spirit of college and university students.

Since Chinese contemporary art songs were created relatively late in the year, research on the teaching of this aspect is not as rich and detailed as research on the teaching of Chinese ancient poems and art songs. The development history and educational process of China's modern art songs, aiming at contributing to the comprehensive enhancement of the role of China's modern art songs in the teaching of vocal music in colleges and universities.

Chinese modern art song emphasizes the fusion of piano accompaniment and human voice, and is a kind of art genre with strong expressiveness and appreciation in vocal singing. The cultivation goal of vocal teaching not only requires students to have the basic singing ability, but also emphasizes the cultivation of students' understanding and expression of "voice" and "emotion", so as to improve students' aesthetic ability. The author combines the usual vocal teaching, the reasonable use of singing teaching training methods, and analyzes the most representative art songs of the West and modern China, so as to reflect the importance of the musical expression of art songs in vocal teaching.

On the basis of absorbing and borrowing from European art songs, Chinese art songs have gradually formed their own style. Poetry with Chinese traditional literary characteristics and melodic modes with national characteristics are the teaching focuses in the vocal teaching of Chinese art songs. Chinese art songs play a good role in educating people in college vocal music teaching. This is also the reason why Chinese art songs occupy a larger proportion in the vocal music teaching repertoire.

## **Teaching of French art songs in China**

### **Research on the teaching of French art songs**

Survey of the current status and practice of teaching Debussy's art songs. Debussy was the founder of impressionistic music, which had a great influence on the modern music of the 20th century. His music did not focus on the landscape itself, but on the emotions inspired by the landscape, so it was called "impressionism". The essence of Debussy's creative character is in his songs, and these vocal works fundamentally reflect every aspect of Debussy's artistic creation, and are unique in today's song literature. At the present stage of vocal music teaching, German and Italian art songs are usually used as the teaching repertoire, and French art songs are often neglected. The author found in the communication with foreign students majoring in vocal music in Italy, Russia, and Canada that the undergraduates there have studied or sung at least one Debussy art song in each semester, on the contrary, the teaching and theoretical research on Debussy's art songs in China's colleges and universities are relatively scarce, and it is very important for the students of colleges and universities to understand the teaching and theoretical research of Debussy art songs. On the contrary, the teaching and theoretical research on Debussy art song singing in colleges and universities in China is relatively scarce, and it is also a weak link for students in colleges and universities. The author participated in the basic skills demonstration of undergraduates of music education in the 2018 session of the national ordinary schools of higher education by virtue of "a person's genre-Debussy" won the microcourse individual award, after a period of time of teaching practice on Debussy's art song has a deep understanding of the Debussy art song, and found that Debussy art song has a good role in promoting the teaching of vocal music, so I investigated the Debussy art song teaching situation in Changchun City, several colleges and

universities, and found that the teaching of the art song has a good effect. Therefore, the author investigated the teaching situation of Debussy art songs in several colleges and universities in Changchun City, and carried out a practical research on the teaching of Debussy art songs by combining the conclusions of the research.

The master of impressionist music in the 20th century is undoubtedly Debussy, and the author focuses on the typical features of Debussy's works - symbolist poetry and impressionist music, interprets *Two Romances* by means of poetic analysis and musical analysis, and introduces how to apply the work to vocal teaching, aiming to help students master the impressionist music style, and train the multisensory cooperation and musicality.

Vocal music is a key discipline in the construction of Chinese and American conservatories, and both conservatories have produced a large number of vocal professionals, who are active in the international opera and concert stage. China's support for the dissemination of high art has led to active concerts and operas, while international exchange performances and projects have emerged one after another, promoting the development and improvement of the training of vocal talents in China's music colleges. Under the influence of various positive factors, China's vocal talent team is gradually growing, and the construction of vocal discipline has made certain achievements. American vocal talent cultivation is influenced by European traditional vocal teaching, and under the fusion of European vocal schools, absorbing the advanced experience of vocal singing, style and teaching of various countries and combining with the strong background of higher education in the country, it has formed its own comprehensive and systematic vocal talent cultivation system, and the internal connection and external interaction of its cultivation goal, teachers, curriculum and evaluation are all with strong logic. From the perspective of curriculum and pedagogy. From the point of view of curriculum and pedagogy, a comparison of the training of vocal talents in music colleges in China and the United States reveals that there are still weaknesses at this stage of China's development, and that the hidden problems have led to the limitations of the training of vocal talents in China in terms of breadth and depth of education. The optimisation of talent cultivation based on the guidelines of combining theory and practice is the demand for reform of China's vocal discipline at the present stage of construction (Chen, 2011).

With the rapid development of multimedia technology and the Internet, teaching is changing from a single mode to multiple modes. Multimodal teaching can be combined with the teaching content, the use of modern technology and various forms of modal information forms, the use of a variety of modal combinations in teaching can optimise the learning conditions, stimulate students' interest and improve learning efficiency. Under the guidance of multimodal teaching theory, the researcher will explore the comprehensive application of French songs, French art songs, musicals, operas and other vocal works in multimodal French teaching, with a view to shedding light on French teaching in the information age.

With the deepening of the new curriculum reform, China has always adhered to the State's educational policy of all-round development of morals, intellect, physique and aesthetics, and in recent years has proposed the universalisation of basic education. Among them, the new curriculum standards for primary and secondary schools still take the cultivation of students' innovative spirit and social practical ability as an important task, and one of the fundamental tasks of basic education reform is the implementation of quality education. The innovative nature of music is self-evident. Successful music education is to



stimulate students' interest in creativity, cultivate the spirit of innovation, and explore the potential of innovation through music education and teaching activities. Good music, from the beginning to the end can bring people a good feeling, can cultivate people's sentiment, purify people's hearts, guide people's emotions, similarly, excellent works of art to bring students the enjoyment of beauty, so that students are full of imagination for beautiful things, from the perspective of the art of understanding the community, from which summed up the standards of truth, goodness and beauty, arousing the students' associations, and a higher level of students to improve their understanding of life.

## Conclusion

Henri Duparc's art songs have been widely recognized by his peers. M. Ravel said "imperfect but brilliant melodies". When J. Massenet saw *The previous life* (*La vie antérieure*, 1884) "(...) as a fundamental work: better to have done only one thing like this than a large and imperfect work". C. Debussy praised in *Monsieur Croche* (1902) the melodies of Duparc: "there is nothing more to say, since they are perfect". G. Fauré was particularly eloquent in an article in *Le Figaro* (1904): "Among current musicians, I don't know of any whose works contain, at the same time as a constant attention to form, a more sustained melodic and harmonic invention and, above all, a deeper sensitivity. "Because of the high artistic value of Duparc's art songs, his vocal music works frequently appear in the teaching repertoire of music colleges and universities in Europe and the United States, and we can often see contestants singing his vocal works on the stage of various international vocal competitions. Famous singers from all over the world have also used his art songs as a repertoire for concerts.

In China, people's understanding of Duparc varies with the region. There are not many people who know Duparc in China, but in the music colleges of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Nanjing, some vocal music teachers are familiar with Duparc's vocal music works. In most of China's smaller cities, there are fewer vocal music students have the opportunity to learn and sing Duparc's art songs in normal colleges. The academic research on Duparc's art songs is also mainly concentrated on vocal music professors in various music colleges in China and famous Chinese composers. At present, in some comprehensive score collections in China, some of Duparc's art songs will be included, which are mainly published by two large publishing houses: People's Music Publishing House and Shanghai Music Publishing House. But until now, there has not yet been a single collection of music scores for Henri Duparc's art songs published in China.

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