

Origin and current situation of Chinese vocal music and Chinese vocal soprano

Shi Jing and Manop Wisuttiapat

Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand

Corresponding Author, E-mail: nicha.musiced@gmail.com

Abstract

Since the introduction of Western bel canto to China in the 1920s, the soprano voice has also appeared in bel canto teaching. Western vocal music was introduced to China through the initial form of church chants, various types of choirs in schools and society, as well as Western opera performances. It was gradually accepted by the Chinese people, and while Western vocal music was spreading in China, it also opened up the learning of modern Chinese vocal music. Over the past century, through learning and borrowing from Western vocal music as an "imported product", including studying, accepting, and imparting modern vocal science singing methods and different Western vocal schools, vocal singing methods, as well as related teaching experiences and knowledge systems, in the process of combining and adapting scientific singing methods with the language, rhyme, and even artistic emotions of the Chinese national anthem, and completing its Chinese style artistic expression.

Keywords: Origin; Current Situation; Chinese; Vocal Music; Chinese; Soprano

Introduction

With the acceleration of the reform and opening-up process, the creation of Chinese opera has also begun to enter a stage of continuous heating. Production has also begun to enter a stage of continuous warming. Especially in the new century. Since the beginning of the new century, new works of opera have been released continuously, which is a very peculiar phenomenon from the world's perspective. It is a very peculiar phenomenon in the world. Thanks to the vigorous development of opera, Chinese opera has become a special phenomenon. As the vigorous development of opera, Chinese opera as a special phenomenon has also begun to attract much attention nowadays.

The categorization examined in this paper is also a reflection on the academic level, upgrading the existing categorization. which in itself will give rise to more observation perspectives and ways of thinking.

This in itself will give rise to more perspectives and ways of thinking, which may provide some inspiring suggestions for thinking about issues related to Chinese Opera. This may provide some inspirational suggestions for thinking about Chinese opera. The author's categorization of Chinese opera. The author's categorization of Chinese opera is mainly centered on two points: First, Perceptual listening, Second, rational judgment. The first is emotional listening, and the second is rational judgment. Perceptual listening refers to the perceptual impression left by observing and listening to some representative Chinese songs and dramas. by observing and listening to some representative Chinese operas. Based on such emotional impression, they eventually form their own rational judgment. The development of Chinese opera from the 1940s to the present, the author believes that there are two basic opera

concepts in Chinese opera. Opera has two basic opera concepts. One is the concept of opera which is created by the Chinese people in consideration of their own audience and national conditions, taking into account the fact that opera should serve the local people (Fu, 2017).

The other is the concept of opera created by the Chinese people in the light of their own audience and national conditions. The other is the concept of opera created by Chinese people, but for a local audience. with an audience that not only takes into account the local Chinese population, but also takes into account the aesthetics of Western operas.

The other type is created by Chinese people, but the audience is not only taken into account by the local Chinese people, but also by the aesthetic standards of Western operas. It also gradually consciously or unconsciously converges with the thinking of Western opera gradually. Based on the above understanding, the author also had some new thinking about Chinese opera, which eventually coalesced into two new classifications of opera, namely Western-style opera and Chinese-style opera. These two classifications are not in opposition to each other, nor do they simply divide the form of opera into two. Differences between Western and Chinese Opera are mainly reflected in the differences in opera concepts. The judgment of Chinese opera thinking needs to be based on the senses of the comprehensive elements of the drama of the opera itself. Under such criteria, it can be said that *The Wilderness* is the first Western-style opera in China in the new era, while *The Hurt Locker* and *The Long March* belong to the Chinese style. In fact, the concept of Western-style opera was first proposed by Prof. Li Jiti, while the concept of Chinese-style opera was first proposed by Mr. Mao Dun. At that time, Mr. Mao Dun highly praised the opera “*The White-haired Girl*” and considered it more qualified to bear the name of “Chinese-style opera” than the old Chinese operas. After “*The White Haired Girl*”, a long and influential tradition of Chinese-style operas was formed in China, which continues to this day. The word “style” here refers to the manner and style. It has a certain degree of self-creation, which is quite different from the Western opera system, and also different from the scope of traditional Chinese drama. Therefore, Chinese opera itself is also a new opera in name only. In the 1960s, there was a debate in China about Chinese and Western opera. From today's point of view, it is true that there existed two concepts of Chinese opera at that time, but this conceptual dispute stayed more on the theoretical level, and there was no division of opera practice in the creation of operas. Currently, people tend to deliberately avoid the debate between Chinese and Western operas, but in fact, when discussing the issue of Chinese opera, people are living in a very tolerant era, which is no longer a time of serious confrontation between the West and the nation. Currently, Western-style opera and Chinese-style opera respect their respective concepts, and each is doing its own thing. So the argument around Chinese and foreign operas here is already gone. As a Chinese opera, it does not consider itself as “earthy”, but is full of confidence that it can keep up with the pace of the times. Western-style operas, on the other hand, do not consider themselves to be “foreign”, but rather, under the influence of Western composers, they have begun to emphasize the culture and content of their own people and culture. Therefore, in terms of the current creative practice of Chinese opera, the two forms of opera have a tendency to get closer to each other, and Chinese operas have begun to absorb some concepts and methods of Western operas. For example, the western orchestra, beautiful singing method and compositional concepts. As for the western opera, composers have also begun to emphasize the integration of Chinese elements, trying to express the essence of Chinese people in the opera. So under the name of Chinese opera, all composers are making the same effort. In different works, we can also feel that the composers are trying to find a

balanced middle way. So in the future, will there still be a view of Chinese opera that contrasts Chinese opera with Western opera? Is it still necessary to categorize Chinese operas and Western operas? The answer here is a resounding yes. It is not because Chinese opera has begun to focus on absorbing the characteristics of Western opera, and Western opera has begun to focus on the national elements of opera, that the boundaries between the two forms of opera can be confused. There is a lot of discussion around these two concepts of opera. In terms of the current classification of Chinese opera, there are three main classification concepts, namely, national opera, proper opera, and new wave opera. There are three main concepts of categorization in Chinese opera, namely, national opera, formal opera, and new wave opera. New Wave Opera refers to the modern operas created by avant-garde compositional techniques since the 20th century. Because it is not the mainstream of Chinese opera creation, this paper does not refer to it for the time being. On this basis, Chinese opera creation can be mainly categorized into two types: national opera and proper opera. First of all, we need to think about what is national opera, and what is proper opera. The concept of national opera is widely used in Chinese opera criticism, but it is controversial in serious academic discussions. It is precisely because of the wide application of this concept that it has also brought a lot of ambiguity to Chinese opera. So what exactly is national opera? And how should national opera be defined? As a relatively complex concept, national opera contains more contents, so its boundary itself is not very clear. As far as the application of the concept of national opera is concerned, there is a great deal of disagreement, with both supporters and detractors holding different views. In addition to this, the concept has a wide range of variations. The smallest can be reflected in a certain type of opera, and the largest can be extended to a variety of upgraded versions, including all kinds of operas. In fact, when discussing Chinese opera, the application of the concept of national opera is very different from the imaginary “national”. Due to the complexity of the concept itself, the application of the concept of national opera is almost out of control. In the absence of strict regulations, people use the term in their own way, making it difficult to communicate effectively in academic discussions. Mr. Ju Qihong tries to limit the concept of national opera to a narrow scope. He defines national opera as the mode of opera created in the 1940s and 1960s, which was characterized by the use of the Chinese opera's panchamatic style of thinking and structure. With the passage of time, this model began to fall into disfavor. so that in recent years (1978-2017) there have only been two outstanding national operas, “Daughter of the Party” and “Wild Fire, Spring Wind, and Fighting Ancient City”. Mr. Ju Qihong's definition of national opera is very clear, but the underlying thinking of the definition method is still the exclusion method. According to Mr. Ju Qihong's conception, except for the two operas mentioned above, are all other operas canonical operas? What exactly is a proper opera, and are the criteria for a proper opera so broad? In addition to this, there is also the question of the rationality of the current categorization of opera (Huang, 2023).

In addition to this, there is also the question of the legitimacy of the current classification of opera, as the concept of opera was first used in the reports of the first Chinese Opera Festival in 2011. At that time, the concept was used because no suitable concept could be found to replace it, and there was a sense of improvisation. Therefore, the existing categorization of Chinese opera itself is somewhat irrational. The definition of the concept is ambiguous, and the criteria and basis for the division are unclear. Why is it necessary to make such a division? What is the significance of the division? This is also the key to our thinking.

Origin and current situation of Chinese vocal music and Chinese vocal soprano

In the past 20 years since entering the 21st century, the overall development situation of China's vocal music art has developed well, especially the vocal music art that conforms to the principles of "scientific, national, artistic and contemporary" and is welcomed by the society. (Fan, 2006).

China has a vast territory, numerous ethnic groups, vast territory, vocal music art has a rich diversity, covering a number of ethnic groups, different regions, a variety of styles of vocal forms. Singing methods are also rich and diverse, there are ethnic, Bel Canto, popular, opera, folk art and original music, ecological, and musical singing forms. People usually understand the "ethnic vocal music" mainly refers to the Han folk songs, rarely including minority songs. As far as the vocal music art of China's 56 nationalities is concerned, the folk songs of Han nationality constitute only a fragment of the Chinese national vocal music. After specifically mentioning the term "national vocal music" (Liu,2018) this concept has become a general understanding of national vocal music, which cannot fully reflect the diversity and richness of Chinese national vocal music art. In 2011, at the fifth National Vocal Music Forum, I put forward the concept of "Chinese vocal music" and summarized the overall form and future development direction of Chinese vocal music art at the present stage.

For a long time, when summarizing vocal singing methods, the three most frequently mentioned singing methods are: "ethnic, Bel Canto, popular", but these three singing methods can not cover all the different forms of vocal singing in modern China. The proposal of "Chinese vocal music" comprehensively covers all the vocal music art forms in China at present, that is, whether it is national singing, Bel Canto singing, popular singing, original singing or folk singing. The combination of Bel Canto and traditional Chinese folk songs, the combination of bel canto and popular singing methods, and the combination of national vocal music and popular music singing methods.. Folk art and musicals, as long as they are Chinese works and people like them, should be called "Chinese vocal music" (Jin, 2011). The older generation of singers active on the stage are not only good at singing foreign songs, but also good at singing Chinese songs. They have a good sense of style and language. People like them very much. Maybe some people think they are Western singing style, but in my opinion, they sing "Chinese vocal music". No matter what kind of singing form, they should reflect the common characteristics of science, nationality, artistry and times, and on this basis show personal characteristics.

The "Chinese Vocal Music" recommended by a number of professional music research institutions led by the China Conservatory of Music is to integrate the essence of traditional Chinese vocal music and all vocal music arts in the world "ancient and modern" into our vocal music teaching, so that our vocal music art can reach a new level and become the most advanced, scientific and colorful "Chinese vocal music school" in the world. Some people think that in China, once you open your throat and sing scientifically, it is considered to be bel canto singing, or singing national vocal music works with bel canto singing. These ideas are wrong. Of course, this has to do with the deep-rooted sound of our traditional folk songs in our memories, and it will take time to reverse this idea of sound (Jin, 2013).

Science is the common denominator of all kinds of singing in the world, but also the common denominator of all kinds of singing in China. Now we advocate the diversity of singing, but the common characteristic of the diversity of singing is that it must be scientific. For example, whether it is Chinese opera, Qu art, or foreign opera, art songs, their works are different, singing forms are different, singing methods are also different. There are differences, they all have different styles, their language is very good, embodies different colors and different personalities, but the development of the individual must be carried out in a scientific system.

In the common category of "Chinese vocal music", no matter what the form is, it must be perfected, must establish a clear direction of development, and take the same road to create the brilliance of Chinese vocal music. Bel Canto singers should not only sing foreign songs well, but also sing Chinese songs well, learn from folk traditions in language and style, stay close to the masses, take the mass line, and make people understand and listen. In short, bel canto singing should be nationalized. Another example: we should constantly strengthen the scientific education of national singing, improve the technical level of popular singing, singing is only a tool needed to sing well. The most important thing is to leave the audience with beautiful joy and emotion.

Soprano is an important part of vocal music art. Since the western Bel canto singing was introduced into China in the 1920s, soprano singing also appeared in the teaching of bel canto singing. In the international definition of the soprano voice is expressed in this way: soprano refers to a female singer with a vocal range of c1-c3, a total of 15 degrees. In China at that time, the best development of traditional vocal music culture was the most systematic and role-playing Chinese traditional opera, which had numerous schools and a complete inheritance system and singing theory system (Xue, 2011).

In China, traditional Chinese opera, as a form of traditional vocal music, has a variety of types, performance forms and singing characteristics. Almost every dialect area in China has its representative operas. However, Chinese traditional vocal music is different from polyphony, harmony and other musical disciplines developed in the Western musical art in the church. The division of Chinese traditional opera trades is completely different from the division of vocal parts in the Western vocal art (Zhai, 2012). The main difference lies in the different division methods. "The roles in traditional Chinese opera are not divided by acoustic characteristics, but mainly by the character, gender, age and occupation of the characters played." Therefore, for Chinese traditional vocal music, soprano is a brand new vocal music concept. Since the 1920s, the western vocal music art was introduced into China through the initial Gregorian church chant, various types of chorus in schools and society, and Western opera performance forms, and then gradually accepted by the Chinese vocal music industry. While the Western vocal music spread in China, it also opened the process of modern Chinese vocal music learning and learning from Western vocal music. This aroused the attention of all Chinese vocal music scholars, who combined western vocal music technology with Chinese language characteristics, and even western vocal music art with Chinese traditional vocal music, and finally presented the flourishing era of Chinese vocal music (Chen, 2016).

In the past hundred years, China's modern vocal music has learned and borrowed from the Western vocal music, including the scientific singing method of modern vocal music, different Western vocal music schools, vocal part singing methods, relevant teaching experience and complete knowledge system. At the same time, the combination and mutual adaptation of scientific sound method and Chinese singing language rhyme and even artistic emotion have completed this vocal music art form with Chinese characteristics, in fact, has walked out of a road of Chinese vocal music.

In the practice of vocal music learning and stage performance, we should not only pay attention to the singing of western vocal soprano, but also pay attention to the singing of Chinese vocal soprano. In the course of learning, I need to sing a large number of soprano works of Western vocal art, mainly including soprano works of different countries and schools such as Italy, France, Russia and Germany. At the same time, it is also necessary to sing soprano works of Chinese vocal music. Since the singing stage is mainly in the Chinese vocal music stage, the singing of Chinese vocal music works, in addition to the use of scientific vocal methods and corresponding singing skills to sing, is more important for the artistic expression and aesthetic pursuit of Chinese vocal music works, how to follow the basic law of Chinese vocal music singing. In the melodic and even multi-part singing and its artistic expression, the singing melody is perfectly and properly combined with the Chinese language intonation.

With the progress of The Times and the comprehensive development of art disciplines, China's vocal music has also developed into a professional singing system of "Chinese national vocal music" with Chinese characteristics along with the "oral" singing form of traditional Chinese folk songs. In the wave of development in the new era, Chinese people's aesthetic appreciation and pursuit of art have been continuously improved, and their scientific and technological and economic strength has been continuously improved. With the increasing material and cultural needs of the people and their longing for a better life, as they become more confident in Chinese culture, the Chinese people need a vocal expression that can accurately and clearly express the current happy life. Therefore, "Chinese vocal music" came into being, and this process has experienced the alternation and evolution of "nationality, times,". After a hundred years of inheritance and development, in the new era, the Chinese vocal singing method was born, and with unique advantages and unrepeatability characteristics to serve the Chinese land, we are the Chinese vocal singing method explorers.

Up to now, the Chinese vocal music circle has called for a teaching method of "scientific, flexible and artistic", based on the Chinese cultural soil and aiming at cultivating Chinese vocal music talents, so as to promote the extension of Chinese vocal music teaching towards the cultural characteristics and attributes of Chinese vocal music, and strive to form a modern and diversified Chinese vocal music teaching system. Therefore, in Chinese vocal singing, the role of soprano has played an increasingly important role, and this is the need for singers in our new era to make their own contributions to the development of this part.

Concept of Chinese Vocal Soprano

With the progress of The Times and the all-round development of art disciplines, Chinese vocal music has developed from folk singing to professional national vocal music, and formed a unique Chinese vocal music with Chinese characteristics after combining with western scientific singing methods. First of all, the Chinese vocal soprano is a division of voice parts in the Chinese vocal music art, and it is also one of the important parts to complement and enrich the Chinese vocal music singing.

In the application of Chinese vocal singing methods, the role of soprano has played a very important role, soprano voice singers need to have a more clear aesthetic timbre, the requirements of this timbre can not be the soprano tone, nor can it be a pure national style singing, so in the control of timbre must be full effort. In addition, the soprano voice part is different from the low voice part, which has a relatively close common timbre between Bel canto and nationalities. Therefore, when singing Chinese ethnic works, the soprano should learn to use Chinese and western singing methods, so as to achieve the effect that can be recognized and loved by the Chinese audience. Therefore, in daily vocal training, We have to adapt and innovate bit by bit (Yu, 2017).

Part classification and characteristics of Chinese vocal soprano

The scientific system of vocal division is very complex and will involve many interdisciplinary disciplines related to vocal music, such as physiology, psychology, stage performance, theater, physics, biology, mathematics, etc. Of course, this does not mean that every voice lover or learner has to understand the above mentioned disciplines before he/she starts to study voice music. But it does put forward a higher requirement for us, that is, we need to have an effective understanding of our own “musical instrument” and its scientific use, to understand the relationship between our own internal physiological structure, the relationship between our own internal physiological structure and the structure of the external environment, as well as the interrelationship between the psychological and the physiological and a series of other factors that may affect. The subjective and objective factors that may affect the singing voice. Only with such theoretical support and a more objective mode of thinking can we eliminate many singing problems that may arise in the later stages of learning to sing at the initial stage.

According to the singer's timbre, range, voice change point, model, resonance, etc., we can tentatively divide the soprano into seven voice parts: light florid soprano, light lyric soprano, lyric soprano, lyric florid soprano, lyric dramatic soprano, dramatic soprano and dramatic florid soprano.

(1) Light Lyric Soprano: Bright, forward, cheerful tone, small volume. The flexibility of the voice is high, suitable for the interpretation of frivolous and lively, charming young female roles. It is suitable for interpreting frivolous, lively, charming and charming young female roles.

(2) Lyric Flowery Soprano: Flexible, bright, penetrating in high voice area. The model is small, suitable for interpreting passionate, pure and sentimental young female roles.

(3) Dramatic Soprano: Soft and flexible tone, thicker voice line, lower volume and tension than lyric soprano.

Volume and tension is greater than the lyric coloratura, the role varies from person to person, with uncertainty, some technically powerful or strong function of the lyric coloratura soprano or dramatic soprano singer, can also serve as the role of the voice, this is a soprano technology and function has a double challenge of the voice!

(4) Lyric soprano: full, soft, dark tone, high volume, suitable for the interpretation of elegant, innocent, It is suitable for female roles of elegance and innocence, and “beautiful and noble” is the most common role attribute of this voice part.beautiful and noble” is the most common attribute of this voice part.

(5) Lyric Drama Soprano: Darker tone, strong dramatic power, high volume, full voice, high vocal range and high voice range.full voice, high register and weak voice are also very tense, suitable for interpreting a devoted but very destructive woman.It is suitable for interpreting a woman who is devoted but very destructive.

(6) Dramatic Soprano: This is the largest soprano voices.The tone color is deep, dark and heavy, each voice area is very resonant, and the volume is bigger than the previous voices, suitable for interpreting the female heroic roles with spirit of sacrifice.

(7) Compound Soprano: The volume and type are very large, with the characteristics of dramatic soprano and mezzo-soprano at the same time.Soprano and mezzo-soprano qualities, the role varies from person to person, with uncertainty, function and technology powerful singers in the role of shortage of cases, will be “understudy” this voice (Yu, 2017).

Conclusion

The evolution of Chinese vocal music over the past century has been marked by a blend of traditional and modern influences, culminating in a distinct and diverse art form that reflects the rich cultural heritage of China. The concept of "Chinese vocal music," encompassing various styles such as ethnic, bel canto, popular, and traditional folk singing, has emerged to unify these diverse vocal traditions under a common framework. This approach not only celebrates the unique characteristics of Chinese vocal art but also emphasizes the importance of scientific, flexible, and artistic methods in vocal training. The role of the soprano, traditionally a Western concept, has been adapted and integrated into Chinese vocal music, highlighting the fusion of Western techniques with Chinese cultural elements. As China continues to advance in artistic, technological, and economic realms, the demand for a vocal expression that resonates with the nation's cultural identity and contemporary experiences has grown, leading to the development of a modern and diversified Chinese vocal music teaching system. This system, rooted in Chinese cultural soil and responsive to the needs of the new era, seeks to cultivate a new generation of vocal talents who can contribute to the ongoing evolution of Chinese vocal music.

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