

**New Bulgarian University**  
**Department of Music**

**Abstract of Dissertation**

**Vocal Interpretation of Selected Songs by  
Franz Schubert, Richard Strauss, Gabriel Fauré and Qing  
Zhu, Huang Zi, Li Yinghai: A Comparative Study from a  
Singer's Perspective**

Full-time Ph.D. student: **Wang Bo**  
In the "Musical performance" doctoral program  
Department of Music, New Bulgarian University  
Research Supervisor Professor Dr. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova  
Performance supervisor Dr. Natalia Afeyan

**2024**

## Table of Contents of the Doctoral Work

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
I、 Reasons for Choosing the Research Topic and Objectives .....	4
II、 Research Process and Methodology .....	8
III、 Research Summary.....	10
<b>Chapter 1 A Brief Introduction to Traditional Chinese Aesthetics</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.1. The Bronze Age .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.2. Chinese Calligraphy .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.3. Chinese Aesthetics under Ethical and Moral Thought .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.3.1. Architecture.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.3.2. Literature.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.3.3. Visual Arts .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.3.4. Traditional Chinese Music .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.4. Localization of Buddhist Culture in China.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Chapter 2 Brief Overview of Western Historical Art Forms</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.1. The Beginning of European Music - Ancient Greek Aesthetic.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.2. The Intersection of Aesthetic Thought: Sensibility and Rationality in Music.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.3. The Fusion of Aesthetics in Music.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Chapter 3 Comparison between Chinese and Western Aesthetics</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Chapter 4 Comparing the Western Romanticism Composers and Modern Chinese Composers</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.1. Franz Schubert and Qing Zhu .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.1.1. A Brief Introduction about Franz Schubert and Qing Zhu .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.1.2. The Music Aesthetic Style of Franz Schubert and Qing Zhu.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.1.3. The Compositional Style of Franz Schubert and Qing Zhu .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.1.4. Using “Da Jiang Dong Qu” as an example .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2. Richard Strauss and Huang Zi .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.1. A Brief Introduction about Richard Strauss and Huang Zi.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.2. The Music Aesthetic and Compositional Style of Huang Zi .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.3. The Music Aesthetic and Compositional Style of Richard Strauss.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.4. The Example of Arts Song Analysis from Huang Zi.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3. Gabriel Urbain Fauré and Li Yinghai .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3.1. A Brief Introduction of The Composers.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3.2 The Aesthetic and Compositional Style of Li Yinghai .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3.3. The Aesthetic and Compositional Style of Fauré.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3.4. The Example of Arts Song Analysis from Li Yinghai .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Conclusion and Contributions</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Research Findings.....	22
Contributions .....	26
<b>References</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
I . Bibliography.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
II Quoted literature.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

## **Abstract**

Art songs, as an important branch of classical vocal performance, have been highly esteemed for centuries as an important branch of classical vocal music, art songs have been highly regarded for centuries. They are considered to be the exclusive art of miniature, in addition to their easily comprehensible structure, melodies, flexible musical textures, rich themes and variety of styles (folk song, lyric song, etc.). in miniature.

Therefore, mastering the art of performing art songs is not an easy task, requiring adept technical skills and high level of culture and musical literacy by the artist. As music has evolved, the study of musical aesthetics has gradually become necessary for performers to understand music. This thesis explores the impact of religious beliefs, humanism, and other factors on the development of musical aesthetics.

By tracing the historical processes of Western and Chinese music, analyzing both positive and negative influences, and comparing the aesthetics of music in the East and West, the dissertation emphasizes the significance of art songs in the development of modern Chinese music.

By selecting works from three Chinese composers as examples, it explains the

progress of Chinese art songs over the past century. This research aims to assist classical vocal performers in establishing a more comprehensive understanding of musical aesthetics, balancing the considerations of aesthetic qualities and singing techniques. Simultaneously, through a comparative analysis of composers with similar features from different cultural perspectives, it provides new insights into how to better interpret art songs, addressing the need to balance musical literacy and singing techniques in the interpretation of art songs.

**Keywords:** Music Aesthetics, Arts Song, Music of the Romanticism, Chinese Composers

# **Introduction**

## **I. Reasons for Choosing the Research Topic and Objectives**

Classical vocal music, especially art song, offers a rich and nuanced field to explore within the discipline of music. There is a deep and subtle area of study in the field of classical vocal music, with a particular focus on art songs. In comparison to opera, art song may be perceived as having a relatively weaker audiovisual capacity, and this is entirely understandable. Opera is a large-scale performing art that combines various musical elements, including plot, character, symphony, stage, singing and interaction with the audience. Typically performed in theatres, concert halls and other large venues, opera, as a form of integrated performance involving multiple arts, has a greater appeal to the general audience of classical music. The staging of art songs, on the other hand, is simple, involving only a piano and a singer, and constitutes chamber music. This minimalist performance format already suggests that the audience for art songs is more niche, requiring a certain level of understanding and appreciation of classical vocal theory. Both genres have their own unique charm and should not be directly compared. Yet, as performers of classical vocal music, we are inevitably faced with this passive comparison.

Speaking of passive comparison, it's important to emphasize that our repertoire, especially for general audiences, often tends towards opera. There are two main reasons for this tendency: firstly, certain excerpts from operatic works are well

known and allow for excellent interaction with the audience, and secondly, the presentation of technical skills tends to be more easily discernible. But appreciating art songs presents a certain threshold for the average listener. Many art song compositions lack the audiovisual impact and can be perceived as more intellectually challenging. This restriction results in a predominant programme structure in which opera extracts predominate, with art songs serving as a supplement. It's an undeniable and widespread reality. There is a noticeable discrepancy in the attention paid to music education and the academic community. This situation further contributes to the lack of accurate and positive dissemination of this classical vocal genre.

Therefore, from the perspective of an expansive academic inquiry, I have chosen art songs as the primary focus of my research.

To be a Western classical vocal learner immersed in a foreign cultural context, overcoming the challenges posed by cultural disparities and the resulting conflicts in artistic philosophies becomes a paramount endeavor. This paper delves into the shifting landscape of aesthetic ideologies in both Eastern and Western traditions, offering a nuanced comparison of their similarities and differences. The objective is to equip vocal performers with diverse perspectives, enabling them to comprehend the beauty inherent in art song performance from various angles and to articulate this beauty effectively.

Entering the 20th century, there has been a transformation in the overall societal

pursuit of aesthetics. Speaking of Chinese indigenous academic-style ethnic vocal technique, it has evolved from original ecological singing methods to a fusion of traditional opera techniques and, most recently, incorporating influences from Western vocal techniques. The singing techniques have undergone multiple updates and iterations, eventually solidifying into the present form. Despite these changes, emphasis is still placed on manipulating the vocal quality through various means, aiming for a sound that is both light and resonant to captivate the audience. The narrative perspective in singing is often centered on the first person, narrating stories with a subtle emotional expression that doesn't excessively highlight individual understanding.

In contrast, Western vocal culture places a high premium on resonance between the performer and the character, demanding a profound personal connection to the role. The focus is on expressing intense personal emotions through the music. Chinese vocal culture seeks a harmonious unity with nature, blending sensibility and rationality. Conversely, Western vocal culture, founded on rationality, explores reality, dissects human nature, and describes characters from their own perspectives, emphasizing uniqueness.

There may be deviations in the understanding of Western aesthetics for Western classical music learners like myself. Problems may arise such as insufficient emotional richness, lack of harmony between personal singing style and character, subtle emotional portrayal, and perceived distance between performer and role,

leading to challenges in effective emotional immersion. This thesis extends from the study of art songs to the evolution of aesthetic concepts in Eastern and Western traditions. By comprehensively examining the differences in musical aesthetics, it provides a deeper understanding of emotional expression in art songs. Moreover, the comparative analysis of the compositional and aesthetic styles of Eastern and Western art songs not only enhances the performer's aesthetic literacy, but also serves as a bridge of communication between composers and audiences. This enables vocal performers to incorporate reasoned personal interpretations based on the demands of different environments and audiences.

Chinese art songs epitomize the evolution from modern Chinese traditional music to national style music. This process, ranging from the simple transposition of Western melodies into Chinese lyrics to the creation of art songs with a distinct Chinese flavor, signifies the delicate balance between musical heritage and innovation. As a crucial genre in the transition from modern Chinese traditional music to national style music, the journey of Chinese art songs unfolds against the backdrop of significant cultural disparities between the East and the West. Music, being a unique language, has the power to transcend cultural boundaries.

In the 19th century, Western music, propelled by the advanced technologies of the time, breached the once-isolated confines of China. The industrial revolution in the West reshaped the global landscape, initiating a process of globalization that set China on a new trajectory. New music theories and aesthetic philosophies from



the West clashed with traditional Chinese ideologies. From the simple adaptation of Western melodies with Chinese lyrics to the creation of Chinese art songs, operas, dance dramas, and the eventual formation of Chinese national style music, art songs have played a pivotal role in this transformative journey. Composers in the realm of art song continually pushed boundaries, breaking free from the constraints of modern Chinese language, the rhythmic patterns of traditional Chinese poetry, and the stylistic confines imposed by Western music. During that era, people gained insights into Western music through songs, and today, the creation of Chinese art songs persists in a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, giving rise to an increasing number of outstanding works that are gradually gaining recognition.

My aim in this dissertation is to give readers from other countries an understanding of the development of Chinese art songs, to highlight their uniqueness and to stimulate interest in the rich tapestry of Chinese artistic expression.

## **II、 Research Process and Methodology**

My research topic involves a comparative study of three Chinese composers and three Western composers, focusing on the development of art songs in China. Through these pairwise comparisons, I aim to investigate the differences between Chinese and Western art songs. Additionally, I intend to explore the development of Chinese art songs.

In terms of the research methodology, I first consider the differences in aesthetic pursuits between Chinese and Western cultures. To understand these distinctions, I delve into the historical evolution of aesthetics in both cultures, examining the influences that shaped their current musical styles. Western music development, intricately tied to religious worship, is scrutinized by tracing the evolution of aesthetic ideologies through religious worship and humanistic thoughts. This method allows me to study the emotional expressions, particularly the constrained emotional expressions and emotionally compelling lyrical expressions prevalent in Western classical vocal music.

In researching the aesthetics of traditional Chinese music, I recognize the importance of comparing it to other art forms in order to capture the simple yet profound characteristics of traditional Chinese music. Therefore, I conduct parallel comparisons with other traditional Chinese art forms to gain insights into China's understanding of musical aesthetics within the broader context of traditional culture.

After confronting Chinese and Western aesthetics, I analyze the similarities and differences to provide a theoretical basis for the subsequent comparative study of three pairs of Chinese and Western composers. Using compositional styles and musical aesthetics as entry points, I establish a timeline with three Chinese composers representing different periods. Horizontal comparisons with three Western composers allow me to explore the unique contributions and styles of

each. This provides an in-depth analysis of their musical styles and aesthetic preferences. I explore the reasons for stylistic similarities or differences by examining the possible influences on each group of composers. To gain a deeper and more sensitive understanding of the development of Chinese art songs and the impact of Western composers at various stages, I conduct a detailed analysis of three compositions by each Chinese composer. This approach facilitates a thorough exploration of the development of Chinese art songs and the influence of Western composers at different phases. Ultimately, this research aims to enhance the understanding and analysis of art songs in a cross-cultural context.

### **III、 Research Summary**

Vocal performance art is, at its core, the reproduction of vocal works. The ultimate performance should not only be faithful to the artistic essence of the piece, but also reflect the performer's profound understanding of it, and elevate it to the level of a complete vocal interpretation. Outstanding performances should include clear and accurate pronunciation, exceptional vocal skills for the thorough expression of musical emotions, and vivid interpretation of the mood of the song. In essence, it is the ability to immerse the audience in the atmosphere created by the vocal performance.

Performers are not just carriers of music; they are also mediators of musical expression. An excellent performance goes beyond technical prowess; it involves an understanding of the cultural background reflected in the work. This

understanding enhances the authenticity and presence of the role, allowing the performer to convey the emotional nuances of the music more clearly through their voice.

For performers, particularly in the context of art songs, which have a simplified stage setup, the demands are stringent (from my personal perspective). Art songs encapsulate various music genres, styles, dramatic elements, and emotional expressions within a concise piece. They represent a genre that captures the grandeur in the details. Each independently complete song harbors unique musical aesthetic insights, whether soft or intense, conveying profound emotions. Fully understanding and impeccably presenting such works is no easy feat. As conveyors of the composer's intent, performers must not only comprehend the poetry and the composer's thoughts but also infuse their own interpretations, demanding a high level of personal refinement.

Art songs have blended a variety of musical styles throughout history as a bridge between 19th century classical music and modern music. This dissertation aims to serve as a reference for classical vocalists from different cultural backgrounds, such as myself, by tracing the stylistic development of Western music across different periods through art songs. It also explores the development of Chinese music in the modern era and its possible future directions. Constructive feedback from esteemed mentors to further improve this thesis would be greatly appreciated.

## **Chapter 1. A Brief Introduction to Traditional Chinese Aesthetics**

After four centuries (6B.C.E.2B.C.E.) an important period of philosophical thinking in ancient China, it has occupied a dominant position in the philosophical system of traditional Chinese culture. The Hundred Schools of Thought had an important influence on the development of Chinese political thought and legal system, as well as the culture, arts and education. As the time went by, it became a diversified social development.

### **The Bronze Age**

The Taotie, dragon, and phoenix, as imagined mythical creatures, have become representative carving patterns in bronze art, marking the beginning of the Chinese nation's vibrant aesthetic pursuit in art.

### **Chinese Calligraphy**

The art of Chinese characters developed alongside bronze art, forming a unique Chinese art form encompassing calligraphy and aesthetics. Chinese Calligraphy isn't solely concerned with the aesthetics of lines but rather pursues the grace of unrestricted flow. "Flowing clouds and flowing water, harnessing bone energy like chasing the wind, harmonizing strength and softness, balancing squareness and roundness" encapsulate calligraphy's attributes that have long guided the art.

Calligraphy attends to the balance of strokes' lightness and weight, their

sharpness and restraint, along with the interplay of solidity and flexibility. Similar to crafting musical melodies or composing poetry and music, calligraphy employs the medium to convey a spectrum of expressions.

### **Chinese Aesthetics under Ethical and Moral Thought**

Confucius reinterpreted ancient "rites and music" with practical reasoning, blending abstract godly worship into daily life, ethics, and politics. Under Confucian influence, art distanced from initial ritual ties, achieving universal sensory connectivity, linking theistic reasoning to social sentiments, and aligning with politics. Confucianism replaced religion, developing divine-human presence in concepts, emotions, and rituals. Taoism emphasizes independent character, "freedom beyond mundane affairs". Seemingly opposing, they coexist, influencing life, ethics, politics, arts. Later art embodies production's utility and natural beauty, asserting art's independence.

#### Architecture

Traditional Chinese architecture's structural layout and appearance reflect a flowing beauty over time, akin to music, showcasing the preference for line art and setting it apart from other architectural styles.

#### Literary

Chinese literature's aim to objectify emotions leads to a key trait: metaphor. Symbolic thinking, inherent in Chinese culture, uses metaphors to convey

profound meanings. Linked to Confucianism and Taoism, metaphors express truths. In ancient China's ritual-centric culture, metaphors conveyed meaning subtly, respecting formality. Traditional Chinese aesthetics seeks subtlety and profound artistic essence. The use of metaphors can enhance the layers and depth of a work, making it more artistic and aesthetically pleasing.

## Visual Arts

In Chinese painting and sculpture, lines transition from being objective and tangible to becoming a means for artists to express the interconnected rhythm of their conceptualizations and artistic visions. Whether depicting objective images or portraying internal spiritual dimensions, there is a pursuit of a flowing sense of lines. Emphasizing the "feeling" over the "seeing," Chinese painting and literature prioritize evoking emotions and allowing viewers to sense the essence beyond external forms. This approach is considered the epitome of the traditional Chinese cultural pursuit of artistic conception.

## Traditional Chinese Music

Confucius proposed the "liyue" system, emphasizing that music itself should possess spiritual cultivation and play a role in cultivating virtues and refinement in individuals, highlighting the functional aspect of music. However, Confucianism opposed the excessive moralizing role of the "liyue" system, asserting that music is a product of heaven, earth, and nature, advocating a naturalistic aesthetic philosophy of music. Although Confucianism and Taoism

have different starting points, in practice, both revolve around the concept of "human" in their theoretical thinking, expressing a human-centric ideology.

### **Localization of Buddhist Culture in China**

Buddhism arrived in China during times of hardship, experiencing both prosperity and decline. The religious concepts of tragedy and redemption in Buddhism were gradually permeated by the human-centric rational and spiritual values of Confucian and Taoist thought. From a historical perspective, the three major philosophical traditions—Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism—did not always exist in harmonious coexistence. Driven by the need to uphold feudal order, each tradition intermittently held superiority over the others. Ultimately, Buddhism integrated into traditional Chinese culture, forming a tripartite synthesis with Confucianism as the foundation, shaping the overall landscape of Chinese philosophical development for nearly a millennium.

## **Chapter 2. Brief Overview of Western Historical Art Forms**

### **The beginning of European Music- Ancient Greek Aesthetic**

Ancient Greece embraced mythology and emphasized tradition and religious rituals, while acknowledging the educational function of music and its association with moral qualities. But it gradually revealed limiting factors in terms of aesthetic innovation in art development.



The emphasis on mystical beliefs and religion often led art to be used for propagating religious themes and myths, constraining other subjects. This resulted in a greater focus on form and technique rather than the expression of emotions in some art creations, creating a sense of detachment and a lack of emotional depth.

### **The Intersection of Aesthetic Thought: Sensibility and Rationality in Music**

Beginning with ancient Greece, Western ancient civilization evolved under the influence of Hellenic culture. Over time, the longing for the mystical realm gradually transformed into religious devotion. By the time of Christianity, music had become tightly controlled within religious ceremonies

### **The Fusion of Aesthetics in Music**

Having moved through the religious constraints of the Baroque era and bypassed the rigor of Classicism, it seemed that the structure of music, both vertically and horizontally, had already achieved a remarkable level of perfection. Music emerged from religious rituals, entered the secular world, and encompassed everything within it, much like the relationship between humans and nature. Humans separated themselves from the rest of the biological species, holding reverence for nature, struggling against it, coexisting with it, and harmoniously advancing together. Therefore, the connection between music and humans is unparalleled by other art forms.

### **Chapter 3. Comparison between Chinese and Western Aesthetics**

Throughout the history of Chinese traditional music aesthetics, there has been an emphasis on the functionality of music. Simultaneously, it has placed constraints on the expression of irrational emotions in music, resulting in the characteristic of measured "blank spaces" that neither lean towards joy nor sorrow. "Unique high-pitched monophonic music without a lower voice part demonstrates a musical expression of a positive attitude towards life amidst sorrow and joy." In contrast, Western music often exhibits a solemn and emotional tone that has been present since the advent of religion.

### **Chapter 4. Comparing the Western Romanticism Composers and Modern Chinese Composers**

Musical aesthetics, in the context of music, serve as a clear spiritual guide. Chinese musical aesthetics is a discipline that was introduced from abroad.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Franz Schubert and Qing Zhu**

A Brief Introduction about Schubert and Qing Zhu

One of the founding figures of the Romantic music movement in 19th-century Europe, Franz Schubert (1797-1828), played a crucial role in shaping the early landscape of Romantic music.

---

<sup>1</sup> Yang Sai, in Introduction part. *A Study of the Fundamental Categories of Chinese Music Aesthetics*, East China Normal University Press, 2015.

Qing Zhu, originally named Shangguo Liao (1893-1959), was a renowned Chinese composer and music aesthete.

### The Music Aesthetic Style about Schubert and Qing Zhu

Franz Schubert, one of the most representative German composers of the Romantic era, lived in the transitional period from Classicism to Romanticism. Qing Zhu held prominent views in musical aesthetics, notably emphasizing that "music is the language of the divine" and "music is the language of the soul."

### The Compositional Style of Schubert and Qing Zhu

Franz Schubert's innovative prowess primarily shines through his contributions to the genre of art songs, or Lieder. While he achieved considerable success in instrumental compositions, he struggled to break free from the shadows of classical giants like Beethoven and Haydn in that domain.

Influenced by late Romantic European composers, Qing Zhu used the pentatonic scale as the foundation for transposing within harmonic structures in his classical Chinese poetry art songs. He primarily employed shifts between major and minor keys, modulations, and the addition of altered notes to infuse the music with emotional depth, enhancing its expressive power.

### Using "Da Jiang Dong Qu" as an example

The song "Da Jiang Dong Qu" composed by Qingzhu. It is hailed as the pioneering work of Chinese art songs. As one of the earliest attempts to

compose using European harmonic techniques, this song does not strictly adhere to traditional Chinese pentatonic scales. However, he used recitative elements to blend classical Chinese poetry recitation with the non-melodic characteristics of the recitative style.

## **Richard Strauss and Huang Zi**

### A Brief Introduction of Richard Strauss and Huang Zi

Huang Zi (1904-1938), a Chinese composer and music educator, Richard Strauss (1864-1949) is often mentioned alongside Gustav Mahler and is considered one of the leading composers of late romantic and early modern eras.

### The Music Aesthetic and Compositional Style of Huang Zi

Huang Zi's creative path included ventures into polyphonic compositions and chamber operas. These forays into counterpoint music reflect his evolving transition towards Modernist music. He was positioned on the cusp of this transformation, and his experimentation with counterpoint compositions serves as evidence of his journey toward Modernist music.

Huang Zi's art songs can be generally classified into two categories. The first category is art songs that draw inspiration from classical poetry. The second category of art songs is based on colloquial poetry in contemporary Chinese, which closely resembles modern Mandarin.

## The Music Aesthetic and Compositional Style of Strauss

Richard Strauss's compositional style was straightforward and delicate, marked by beautiful and grand melodies, rich harmonic colors, and an expertise in using music to create an atmosphere that translated the emotions in poetry into the music. By doing so, he added depth and imagery to the poem's emotional content.

Richard Strauss was a composer who prospered in the later stages of the Romantic period. During this time, it was inevitable that the development of music would be closely tied to the poetry itself. However, from another perspective, this connection allowed composers to intricately weave the details of the poetry into their music.

## The Example of Arts Song Analysis from Huang Zi

Huang Zi's song has similarities to Richard Strauss's penchant for composing with relatively unknown poetry, with lyrics written by Wei Hanzhang, a contemporary lyricist of his time.

## **Li Yinghai and Gabriel Urbain Fauré**

### A Brief Introduction about Li Yinghai and Gabriel Urbain Fauré

Li Yinghai (1927-2007) was a renowned Chinese music educator, theorist, and composer. His works spanned nearly all musical genres, including Western instrumental compositions as well as symphonic and chamber works featuring Chinese traditional instruments.

Gabriel Urbain Fauré (1845-1924) was a French composer, organist, pianist and teacher. He was one of the foremost French composers of his generation, and his musical style.

### The Aesthetic and Compositional Style of Li Yinghai

In his book "Han Ethnic Modes and Their Harmony", he emphasized the necessity to study various harmonic techniques from an expressive perspective.<sup>2</sup> This signifies that the richness of harmony should not come at the expense of damaging the national style. The application of techniques should be in harmony with the work's inner essence, promoting flexibility in using this aesthetic attitude.

Li Yinghai's composition techniques were incredibly diverse. In the same piece, he incorporated the techniques of both tonal music and polyphonic music, constructing harmonic textures designed to convey the mood and presenting a variety of imitative creative methods.

### The Music Aesthetic and Compositional Style of Fauré

Fauré's musical style was influenced by his teacher, Saint-Saëns, who himself inherited elements from the transitioned through classical and romantic periods. Fauré's understanding of harmony was unique and continually evolving. It was influenced partly by his early studies and partly by his love for French

---

<sup>2</sup> Li Yinghai, *Han Ethnic Modes and Their Harmony*, p92, Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House in 1959, with a revised edition by Shanghai Music Publishing House in 2001.

traditional music. The pursuit of melodic lines made the polyphonic elements in Fauré's music more pronounced. Still, unlike other romantic composers of his time, his works are characterized by an introverted and gentle nature. His melodies are clear, and their structure is well-organized.

#### The Example of Arts Song Analysis from Li Yinghai

The art song "Mooring by Maple Bridge at Night," with lyrics from the Tang Dynasty poet Zhang Ji, showcases Li Yinghai's masterful technique in melody composition, flexible harmonic arrangements, well-structured rhythms, and harmonious integration with the poem's rhyme scheme.

### **Conclusion and Contributions**

#### **Research Findings**

Singing, piano accompaniment, poetry and various other elements are integrated in the performance of art songs. Although their structure appears simple on the surface, their content is remarkably rich. Looking at the history of art songs, their roots can be traced back to the secular music of the 12th and 13th centuries, mainly featuring troubadours. Throughout nearly a millennium of development, art songs have retained several key characteristics. First, they emphasize personal emotion, whether in the unconventional love songs of the troubadours of their time or the rich musical themes of the Romantic period. Art songs are always in direct communication with the composer's emotions, making them a pure and nuanced form of lyrical expression. Second, poetry plays a dominant role in art songs.

Although seemingly composed for poetry, this dominance has shifted since the era of Schubert, marking the rise of the art song as a mainstream musical genre. Its heyday during the Romantic period was characterized by the fusion of rigorous poetic structure, restrained yet passionate emotion, and profound philosophical insight. While retaining the characteristics of poetry, the music imbued art songs with a soul, allowing for the depiction of complex emotions, the creation of poetic atmospheres, and even a dialogue with the human voice, which became another important component in the soul of the performance.

Hegel claimed that poetry was the absolute pinnacle of the art forms. If music during the Romanticism is considered to be a universal form of emotion, or a higher form of emotionality, then the art song is an immediate proof of it. However, the perception of art songs is contradictory, both for the audience and the performers. Although concise and refined, art songs, even when part of a cycle, maintain the completeness in each piece, while not having particularly close connections between them. Although elegant, the literary and philosophical aspects within the music pose a challenge to comprehension. Performers must not only understand the work from a musical perspective, but also undertake an in-depth analysis based on the literary and philosophical aspects within the music. This approach allows for an objective understanding of the composer's creative background and a subjective understanding of why the composer chose a particular approach.



In this intricate creative concept, capturing nuanced emotional expressions in art songs is not straightforward. Performers must navigate the subtle differences in languages and transcend cultural disparities. Through an exploration of Western and Chinese musical aesthetics, a shared point becomes evident: the necessity of restrained emotional expression to achieve a balance between sensibility and rationality in art. The highest level of art still requires establishing a connection with human emotions, emphasizing a human-centric approach to facilitate a more direct and pure transmission of emotions. The differences lie in the Western emphasis on religious theology, allowing music to possess imaginative space and establish a harmonic system. This, coupled with the simultaneous influence of theology and natural science, resulted in unique styles in Western music across different periods. Gradually evolving to a perspective centered on humanity's emotional connection with the surrounding environment, Western music's techniques and aesthetic aspirations continue to change to meet the contemporary spiritual demands.

On the other hand, Chinese traditional aesthetics embody a commitment to humanistic spirit and compatibility with the natural environment. This implies that Chinese traditional music, including other traditional arts, cannot be analyzed solely from a musical perspective. By examining Western and Chinese musical aesthetics from different angles, a better understanding and comparison of the origins of these differences in emotional expression can be achieved. To this end, I consulted numerous books on Western and Chinese aesthetic ideas and musical

aesthetics. This deep dive into the differences in emotional expression in works from different cultures is believed to assist classical vocal performers, particularly those from diverse cultural backgrounds, in better understanding the intricacies of singing art songs.

A more intuitive understanding of the ideological shifts in modern Chinese music composition can be achieved by horizontally comparing musicians from different periods in both Western and Chinese music. It also sheds light on the direct or indirect influences of Western music from the Romantic period on several generations of Chinese composers throughout China's modern history. This comparison helps to summarize and categorize musical styles and to improve the control of emotional expression in vocal techniques from different perspectives.

Traditional Chinese music places less emphasis on the development of instrumental music and focuses primarily on vocal styles rooted in ethnic traditions. It requires an appreciation of Chinese cultural heritage to understand the complex implications involved. Art songs, as a microcosm of the transformation of traditional Chinese music into Chinese national style music under the influence of Western music, offer a direct insight into this development through the analysis of three art songs composed at different times. This provides a basis for classical singing students, especially those for whom Chinese culture is unfamiliar territory, to study and understand Chinese art songs and enrich their understanding of different musical genres.

Through this thesis, I aim to contribute to the interdisciplinary research on art songs and provide a better methodological approach for all classical vocal learners to study art songs more effectively.

## **Contributions**

- This dissertation contributes by systematically summarizing the aesthetic characteristics of various aspects of traditional Chinese art, such as calligraphy, painting, architecture, etc., and deducing them based on the aesthetic features of other traditional arts. It discusses the dual nature of Chinese traditional music, which has a simple structure (monophonic pentatonic scale music without harmonic structure and a focus on the intrinsic aesthetic appeal) but a complex connotation (emphasizing aesthetic pursuits of artistic expression). The paper explores the aesthetic feature of pursuing "linear beauty" in Chinese traditional arts, a feature prevalent in various forms of art with musical characteristics.
- Examining the constraints of emotions by religion, the liberation of emotions by human-centered thinking, and the relationship between rationality and sensibility, the paper discusses the aesthetic features manifested in the development of Western music in different periods and the guiding impact of the relationship between rationality and sensibility on musical development. The dissertation delves into the rise of Humanism at the end of the 18th

century and its connection with the "Chinoiserie" that was popular in Europe at the time. From a historical perspective, it discusses the cultural exchanges between Eastern and Western modern aesthetics, opening up new avenues of thought for music composition. For instance, the paper mentions Gustav Mahler's use of works by the Chinese Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai as a blueprint for the composition of "Der Trunkene im Frühling", the fifth movement of "Das Lied Von Der Erde", demonstrating in-depth research on the rhythm and metaphorical writing techniques of Chinese poetry and the high-level fusion of Eastern and Western aesthetics. This type of creative approach can provide inspiration for the composition of Chinese art songs.

- Based on the characteristics of art songs, the research attempts to demonstrate the commonalities between Western music, which entered China in the late 19th century, and Chinese aesthetics from practical and aesthetic perspectives. It discusses the aesthetic similarities and differences between Eastern and Western cultures in terms of "lyricism", "nationality" and "poetry."
- The dissertation argues that the inherent aesthetic appeals of art songs and their association with traditional Chinese aesthetics are possible reasons for their higher development speed and scale compared to other types of music composition during the same period.
- The research assumes the Romantic period as the possible context for the three

Chinese composers and conducts parallel comparisons between their compositional styles and aesthetic styles with Western composers who share similarities. This method highlights the progressive development of Chinese art songs more prominently.

- For the first time, this text analyzes the structure of the art song "Da Jiang Dong Qu" by Qing Zhu from the perspective of three structural features: recitative, interlude, and aria. Through formal analysis, it demonstrates that this art song follows the structure of an aria with recitative elements.