

Vocalist Training in The Chinese Professional Musical Educational System: Bel Canto Vocal Style. Statement of The Research Problem

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Abstract— With the popularization and development of music education in China, vocal training as an important component of music education is becoming increasingly important and important. In China's professional musical education system, vocal training not only helps students master basic musical skills and expressiveness, but also contributes to the development of their culture and artistic aspirations. Therefore, questions related to the study of forms and methods, problems and the possibility of their solution in the process of vocal training in the Chinese musical education system have a very important practical and theoretical value. Over the course of several decades in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, there has been an increase in the international influence of Bel Canto. In the context of globalization, cultural "soft power" is taking an increasingly important place in competition between countries. Systematic vocal training in the direction of Bel Canto, in order to educate more highly qualified vocalists, can enhance the influence of Chinese vocals on the international musical scene. The long-overdue need for a special study devoted to the purposeful consideration of the methods of musical education and vocalist education in China based on a detailed study of the works of the Italian opera Bel Canto of the first half of the 19th century, makes the research topic extremely relevant.

Keywords— Bel Canto, China, regional differences, system of professional musical education, vocal pedagogy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, there has been a clear increase in the international influence of Bel Canto. In the context of globalization, cultural "soft power" is taking an increasingly important place in competition between countries. Systematic vocal training in the direction of "Bel Canto" to educate more highly qualified vocalists can enhance the influence of Chinese vocals on the international musical scene.

In China's professional musical education system, vocal training not only helps students master basic musical skills and expressiveness, but also promotes the development of their culture and artistic aspirations. Therefore, questions related to the study of forms and methods, problems and the possibility of their solution in the process of vocal training in the Chinese musical education system have a very important practical and

theoretical value.

The long-overdue need for a special study devoted to the purposeful consideration of the methods of musical education and vocalist education in China based on a detailed study of the works of the Italian operatic Bel Canto of the first half of the 19th century, makes the research topic extremely relevant.

Given the peculiarities of the geographical location and remoteness of some regions of China, there is a need to use the capabilities of modern digital and distance learning technologies to actively integrate them into vocal art training systems developed by modern vocal teachers at Chinese universities, which may be geographically remote, making it difficult to find talented performers. Students and vocal teachers should have access to a high-quality vocal education system. Teachers will be able to receive special training for conducting musical and educational activities at a high professional level.

II. BEL CANTO VOCAL STYLE

The Bel Canto vocal style originated in Italy at the end of the 16th – beginning of the 17th century and is characterized by a bright, rich, soft timbre of a voice with strong resonance and a metallic tinge. The strengthening of vocal training in the direction of "Bel Canto" in the musical educational system of ordinary universities contributes to the transmission and dissemination of this outstanding vocal style, the development of the culture of Chinese musicians.

Italian opera has occupied one of the central places in European musical culture for almost three centuries (17th – 19th). Summarizing the evidence of eighteenth-century theorists, the American musicologist Leonard Ratner writes in his monograph *Classical Music* about the leading position of Italian music in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries [1, p. 335]. In the controversy that has repeatedly arisen, primarily between French and Italian opera ideals (for example, in the *History of Music* by J. Bonnet [2], in the famous aesthetic "wars" of the 18th century. - Buffonov, Glukists and Piccinists), even the opponents of Italian opera recognized its primacy in Europe. In the 19th century, German, French, and Russian opera traditions largely developed in opposition to Italian. Numerous statements by music lovers of that time are indicative in this regard. One of the travelers, for example, noted that "the Germans borrowed the original taste of singing from Italy," thereby emphasizing the priority of the Italian vocal school [1, p. 336].

Manuscript received Aug. 11, 2025.

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Italian opera in the first half of the 19th century is associated with the works of composers J. Rossini (1792-1868), V. Bellini (1801-1835), G. Donizetti (1797-1848), with the activities of the outstanding vocal teacher M. Garcia-father (1775-1832), M. Garcia-son (1805-1906), the famous singers I. Colbrand (1785-1845), M. Malibran (1808-1836), J. Pasta (1797-1865) J. Roubini (1794-1854). In most musicological works, this period is attributed to the Bel Canto era. The term Bel Canto (Italian for "beautiful singing") has been in use since the middle of the 19th century. The first mentions of him, apparently, are found in J. Pacchini (1796-1867) in his program for students of singing in Lucca (1820s) and N. Vaccai (1790-1848) in the composition *12 Ariettas for the Study of Italian Bel Canto* (1840). Rossini considered the natural beautiful voice, the art of vocal ornamentation and a sense of style to be characteristic features of Bel Canto, which cannot be taught, but can be mastered by listening to good Italian singers (citing according to: [8, p. 381.]). In the musicological literature of the 20th century, the term Bel Canto is interpreted very broadly: as a vocal performance art, as a style of composing, as a pedagogical tradition. In the encyclopedic sources and literature of our time, the necessary components of Bel Canto are called the beauty of timbre, evenness of voice throughout the entire range, absolute control of breathing (filar il suono), possession of legato, brilliant virtuoso technique (citing according to: [9, S. 58]), the ability to improvise [10].

Fundamentally important for defining the essence of Bel Canto, it seems to us, is that in the musical phenomena designated by this term, vocal art has a priority aesthetic value, which organically combines virtuoso and cantilevered singing. The dramatic tasks, the conditioning of the poetic text, and the characterization of the image do not dominate, but give way to the intrinsic beauty of the music, concentrated primarily in the vocal melody. Therefore, we join the position of those researchers who consider the first half of the 19th century. the last stage and the last rise of Italian Bel Canto.

If Rossini's music, as a rule, always evoked enthusiastic reviews from both contemporaries and historians, then the work of Bellini and Donizetti was not always evaluated unanimously. For many years, the works of these composers were considered an intermediate, crisis stage in the development of Italian opera. Bellini and Donizetti began their careers at a time when Rossini reigned supreme on the Italian opera scene. The famous Italian critic Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) called the composer the greatest genius of the epoch [11]. Reine was a "divine maestro", comparing Rossini to "the sun of Italy, scattering sonorous rays all over the world" and relentlessly enjoying his "golden tones; stars of melodies, sparkling moth dreams" [12, p. 48].

Analyzing the relationship between coloratura and poetic text, we relied mainly on the method of the 19th-century Italian scientist and musician B. Asioli [48], who identified a musical phrase with different verse sizes (verso settinario, verso ottonario, etc.)."

III. INVESTIGATION OF WAYS TO INTENSIFY BEL CANTO TRAINING: THE FOUNDATIONS STUDENTS OF CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

A. Basis

The study of the Bel Canto tradition has shown that this phenomenon developed in close interaction of vocal pedagogy, compositional creativity and performing practice. This interaction was manifested in the fact that the composers created opera parts, focusing on the vocal and technical capabilities of a particular singer; that the vocalists, adding their virtuoso inserts and ornamental ornaments, unwittingly became co-authors of the composer. The changes taking place in composing and vocal performance affected the methods of teaching the art of singing, which was reflected in the theoretical treatises of that time.

The melodic styles of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti have a number of significant similarities, which largely correspond to the principles prevailing in vocal performance in the first half of the 19th century and the concept of style formulated by Manuel Garcia in his "School of Singing." All three composers have canto spianato, canto fiorito, and canto declamato with their characteristic melodic-rhythmic, tempo, and articulatory properties. In addition, the melodic structure of the vocal part correlates with the register structure of the voice, the character of the opera character, his status in the opera and the type of voice. Important principles of the structural organization of melody are the symmetry of motifs, phrases and larger syntactic units, techniques of melodic development, etc. The soprano parts of all three composers are designed, in general, for the two-register singing style that has become typical for Bel Canto in the 18th century - chest (di petto) and head (di testa) methods of sound formation - with a high, as in castrati, transition level on the sounds c2, d2, indicated in the tractate of Tosi or fi, gi, designated as transitional tones in the later works of Mancini and Manstein.

At the same time, the vocal parts of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti have their own individual characteristics: the signs of spianato, canto fiorito, canto declamato manifest themselves in different ways and in different combinations. Rossini is a master of figured singing, Bellini is a master of cantilevered singing; In Donizetti's melodies, the role of declamation increases significantly. It is used not only in various recitative constructions, but is also embedded in canto spianato canto fiorito.' All three elements of Bel Canto freely alternate, smoothly flow into each other. There are also differences in how composers interpret coloratura. Rossini and Donizetti in most cases consider it as a virtuoso insertion, intonationally and rhythmically contrasting with the theme. Bellini brings out the coloratura from the theme itself, its melodic chants and fiorituras. The ornamentation turns out to be "fused" into the melodic line of the aria, and at the same time it further binds the motifs together. In some soprano arias and parts, Donizetti, unlike Rossini and Bellini, uses the middle voice register with a mixed type of sound formation: In vocal theory, this idea of a

"register mix" is based on the middle; The theory of the range of female voices (epcis2) was first proposed and substantiated by Garcia.

Vocal pedagogy, theory and performing practice of Bel Canto of the 19th century continued the traditions of the 18th century, but also introduced a lot of new things. The education of a singer who was equally accessible to the performance of extended cantilevered melodies and bright virtuoso decorations, who possessed a significant range of voices and was able to sing in different "manners", who was fluent in various performance nuances that made it possible to achieve expressive - sharply expressive or lyrical, penetrating sound - was the main goal of vocal pedagogy in the first half of the 19th century. These principles corresponded not only to certain fundamental laws of vocal performance in general, since they allowed to fully reveal the virtues of the voice, but also to the aesthetic requirements of romantic opera with its vivid images and fascinatingly beautiful melodies, which abound in the scores of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti.

B. On the need to develop methodological recommendations for the course "Learning Bel Canto as an enhancement of vocal training" for students of Chinese universities

The long-overdue need for a special study devoted to the purposeful consideration of the methods of musical education and vocalist education in China based on a detailed study of the works of the Italian operatic Bel Canto of the first half of the 19th century, makes the research topic extremely relevant. Given the peculiarities of the geographical location and remoteness of some regions of China, there is a need to use the capabilities of modern digital and distance learning technologies to actively integrate them into vocal art training systems developed by modern vocal teachers in Chinese universities, which may be geographically remote, which makes it difficult for talented students and vocal teachers to access the education system. having special training for conducting educational activities at a high professional level.

Here are examples of famous Chinese vocalists who have achieved high results and have outstanding international experience in this field.:

- Lao Chanyun, professor at the Shanghai Conservatory, head of the Vocal Department, is known as "Asia's first baritone." Within one year, he won first places three times at the *41st Tourloise International Vocal Competition in France*, the *Domingo World Opera Competition* and the *Norwegian International Queen Sonja Vocal Competition*. He became the first A Chinese opera singer who performed on the world opera stage, as well as a favorite student of Master Domingo. Lao Chanyun has performed in many countries around the world, collaborated with many leading artists and orchestras, and received high marks.
- He Hui, a world-renowned soprano voice, professor of vocal at the Xi'an Academy of Music, is renowned as a bright star of the Chinese opera world. She performed the

main roles in numerous world operas, such as *Pupechka*, *Tosca*, etc. For his deep and gentle interpretation, and Her outstanding singing skills have also gained wide international recognition. She has repeatedly received awards at international vocal competitions, including taking first place at the *42nd International Vocal Competition named after Verdi* in Italy, becoming the first Chinese woman to win this honor. As the first Chinese soprano, she successfully performed on the stage of such world opera houses as the Metropolitan Opera in the USA, the Scala in Milan, etc., demonstrating the extraordinary talent of Chinese opera singers. She has collaborated with many well-known artists and orchestras, such as the *New York Philharmonic Orchestra*, the *London Symphony Orchestra*, and others, whose performances have brought He Hui international fame. She has repeatedly been invited to important international music festivals and concerts, such as the *Salzburg Music Festival*, the *Vienna Music Festival*, etc., thus becoming a kind of bridge for cultural exchange between China and the West.

Using the example of the success achieved by these vocalists, one can trace the growth of the global popularity of Chinese singers on the world stage and their beneficial influence on the development and growing popularity of professional vocal training. These outstanding performers prove that China is capable of providing high-quality Bel Canto vocal education.

Specification of research problems. The personal experience at the university of a small Chinese city gave Ji YuChi the opportunity to see first-hand a number of problems related to professional vocal training in China. Almost all of China's outstanding professional vocalists come from major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. Of course, China has its own folk music, and in the vocal art more attention is paid to teaching folklore in particular, folk singing, especially in relatively remote or deep regions of China. As for teaching the Bel Canto style, in developed countries It is at a good level in cities, but universities in small towns do not pay as much attention to it. In addition, there are big problems with the availability of professional Bel Canto teachers, who probably, if there are, do not have sufficient professionalism and a deep, clear and clear understanding of Bel Canto. Subsequently, students trained by these teachers become teachers in elementary and secondary schools, thus forming a vicious circle of untrained teachers.

All of the above allows us to formulate the following contradictions, characteristic of professional vocal training in modern China:

- The contradiction of territorial differentiation. In China, outstanding singers are mainly concentrated in large cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, while the level of vocal education (Bel Canto) in less developed regions is relatively low. This may be related to the level of the economic development of different regions, the uneven distribution of educational resources and the degree of attention to culture. Large cities have more educational resources, a better economic base and

wider opportunities for cultural exchange, which attracts more outstanding singers and vocal teachers.

- A contradiction in the direction of vocal art training. In Chinese vocal art, more importance is given to the cultivation of national singing, while Bel Canto training is not given due attention. This may be related to the traditions of Chinese national music, aesthetic preferences, and the direction of educational policy. National singing, being an important part of Chinese vocal art has deep historical and cultural roots, so it plays a leading role in educating the next generation of vocalists. However, Bel Canto, as an important field of international vocal art, is developing in China with certain limitations.

- The contradiction of the lack of professional Bel Canto teachers. There are big problems with the availability of professional Bel Canto teachers, as some of them may not have the proper skills, professional knowledge and experience in teaching Bel Canto. This may be due to the degree of Bel Canto distribution in China, the channels of professional teacher training, as well as supply and demand in the educational market. Since the development of Bel Canto in China is relatively late, and the training of professional teachers requires time and resources, this leads to a shortage of professional Bel Canto teachers in some regions.

- The contradiction of the "vicious circle" of education quality. Due to the lack of Some Bel Canto teachers have professional knowledge, and their students have deficiencies in vocal skills and expressiveness. When these students become secondary school teachers, this deficiency is passed on to the next generation of students, thereby forming a vicious circle. This is mainly related to the professional qualifications, teaching methods, and educational concepts of teachers. If teachers do not have professional knowledge and experience in teaching or use inappropriate teaching methods and concepts, this will have a negative impact on students' vocal training and performances. This negative impact will gradually accumulate over time, eventually leading to a vicious circle of educational quality.

Thus, there are problems of territorial differentiation and uneven development of training areas in Chinese vocal education. Outstanding singers and vocal teachers are most often concentrated in large cities, while the development of Bel Canto is relatively limited. The lack of teaching resources and the vicious circle of educational quality are the main problems facing Chinese vocal education at present.

C. The state of scientific development of the research problem

This research topic is deeply immersed in the study of the current state of vocal training in the Chinese professional music education system, especially in the situation of teaching Bel Canto. For our research, the works of Russian authors, well-known vocal teachers, such as M. I. Glinka, M. A. Sushlin, A. C. Brotvolskaya, G. A. Varlamov, V. I. Yushmanov. The works of foreign vocal teachers such as Manuel Del Popolo Vincente Garcia (summarized a number of

principles and methods of vocal training, wrote and published *Method and Exercises for Singing*), Manuel Patricio Rodriguez Garcia (put forward the theory of "swallowing stroke" and invented a laryngoscope to monitor the activity of the larynx during sound production), Matilda Marchesi (wrote 24 exercise books *Bel Canto: A Theoretical and Practical Method of Singing*).

As for the works of Chinese vocal teachers, it should be recognized that the Chinese literature library is distinguished not only by a small number of sources, but also by a narrow range of research problems. These are mostly small articles in professional journals devoted to certain aspects of students' technical development.

There is currently a lack of awareness in China about the current state of professional vocal training. The lack of a theoretical basis and the identified contradictions outline the topics of future research, which aims to solve these problems and promote the continuous and healthy development of Chinese vocal education.

Let us note the following main factors that we identified at the preliminary stage of our pedagogical experiment, affecting the level of vocal training in China:

1. There is a significant impact of regional differences on the level of education in the field of vocal art.

2. There are significant differences in the level of education in the field of vocal art between large cities (such as Beijing, Shanghai) and less developed regions, which are mainly due to the level of economic development and, consequently, the distribution of educational resources, as well as the degree of attention to vocal culture in general.

3. In the current Chinese vocal art education system, there is a disequilibrium in the areas of folk and Bel Canto singing training, with more emphasis on folk singing.

4. There is a shortage of Bel Canto teachers, which significantly affects the quality of education:

5. There are problems in the selection and training of Bel Canto teachers, and some teachers do not have professional knowledge and experience in teaching Bel Canto.

Thus, in the current vocal art education system, there is a vicious circle in the quality of vocal education being implemented in China, where some teachers lack professional knowledge, which leads to ineffective student education and, in turn, affects the training of the next generation of students."

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF A RESEARCH APPARATUS FOR CONDUCTING FURTHER RESEARCH ON THE COURSE VOCAL TRAINING IN THE SYSTEM OF PROFESSIONAL MUSICAL EDUCATION IN CHINA

The object of our research is vocal training in the Chinese professional musical education system.

The subject of the research is theoretical and practical methods of vocal teaching at musical universities in modern China and Russia.

The purpose of the study is to identify the state, problems and measures to improve vocal teaching in the Chinese

professional musical educational system.

Research problem s:

- to find ways and means to increase the accessibility and uniformity of vocal education,
- analyze ways to reduce the territorial gap in the level of vocal education between large cities and backward areas,
- identify mechanisms for optimizing and allocating educational resources in order to increase investments in vocal education, including teaching staff, equipment, and classrooms,
- identify methods for popularizing the teaching of Western singing, in particular the Bel Canto style in modern China,
- offer a variety of learning methods, including online learning, face-to-face learning, hands-on learning, with high effectiveness and the ability to keep students motivated,
- consider alternatives to promote the comprehensive development of professional vocal education in China,
- to test the developed program in the real educational process, aimed at enriching the artistic and cultural baggage of students, expanding their horizons and worldview,
- to identify the specifics of the professional training of teachers in the Bel Canto genre, in order to ensure high-quality vocal education and break the "vicious circle" in Bel Canto education.

The following research methods were used to solve the tasks and verify the initial assumptions:

- theoretical: structural analysis of scientific literature (music pedagogy, theory of vocal performance, art history),
- application of methods of deduction and induction, analogy and modeling,
- teaching Bel Canto vocal performance in practice and conducting a pedagogical experiment,
- generalization and systematization of the material from the standpoint of the research topic, content analysis of literary sources;
- empirical: observation, questioning, interviewing, expert assessments,
- quantitative and qualitative processing of the data obtained,
- a corrective analysis of their own vocal lessons in educational institutions in China.

Based on the tasks set, the research hypothesis is put forward, according to which the development of professional Bel Canto vocal skills in Chinese music universities will be effective if the following conditions are met:

- development of a systematic learning system, namely the creation of a Bel Canto learning system, the development of scientifically based training courses that ensure the systematic study and mastery of basic skills and means of expression of Bel Canto by students,
- training professional teachers with a focus on teaching Bel Canto, improving their professional qualifications and teaching abilities, providing them with solid knowledge in the field of Bel Canto and rich pedagogical experience to effectively guide student learning,

- increasing the importance of vocalists on the world stage by systematically training highly qualified vocalists and promoting cultural exchange between China and the West,
- synthesis of trends in the study of national singing and Bel Canto, through the integration of Bel Canto training into classical vocal education, the implementation of an organic combination of both directions,
- creation of a regular assessment system capable of assessing the progress of students' vocal learning and teaching effectiveness, timely identify problems and make adjustments,
- promoting the development of students through systematic vocal training, fostering their cultural taste, and providing them with resources to solve various tasks of vocal training and future tasks in the professional field,
- political support and guarantees from the State aimed at supporting educational institutions that promote the development of vocal education and ensure its sustainable development,
- participation and cooperation of society, namely, strengthening cooperation between all sectors of society, including art groups, cultural institutions, enterprises, etc., creating a favorable atmosphere of general attention and support for vocal education from the whole society.

We would like to emphasize that vocal singing training for students of Chinese universities according to the developed methodology is carried out both in full-time format (directly in the process of their studies in China) and in remote form, taking into account the use of modern distance learning systems for musical disciplines. For this purpose, the forms and methods developed by the staff of the research and methods laboratory *Music Computer Technologies* (RML *Music Computer Technologies*) of the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, as well as methods created by graduate students and doctoral students from China who carry out research under the supervision of Professor I. B. Gorbunova (see, for example, in [10; 11]).

It is also planned to use the developed tasks for the system of vocal education and training in Chinese universities within the framework of Ji Yuchi's dissertation research *Vocal Training in the System of Professional Musical Education in China* to develop an intelligent cataloging and analysis system for the music of the peoples of Russia and the world. The work in these areas is currently being carried out jointly by scientists from the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan: employees of the RML *Music Computer Technologies* of the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia and researchers from the laboratory *Research of Azerbaijani Professional Music of Oral Tradition and Their New Directions: Organology and Acoustics* of the U. Hajibeyli Baku Music Academy under the scientific guidance of member of the Union of Composers of Azerbaijan, Doctor of Philosophy in Art History Imina G. Aliyeva. The relevance of developments in this scientific and practical field of activity is also due to the need to take urgent measures to preserve traditional creative work in the context of globalization, and interdisciplinary dialogue creates conditions

for developing a common strategy in solving scientific problems associated with research conducted in this area [12].

A number of issues discussed in this section were voiced by Ji YuChi in the report *Vocal Training in China's Professional Musical Education System: Problems and Development Paths*, presented at the 23d International Research and Practical Conference *Contemporary Musical Education: Creative Work, Research, Technology — 2025* [13].

V. CONCLUSION

The conducted preliminary and ascertaining stages of the pedagogical experiment revealed the need to adjust the educational situation related to the training of vocalists in the Chinese professional music education system.

Among the areas of such adjustment that we have identified, we will single out the following, which, in our opinion, are the main ones:

- optimizing the allocation of educational resources and the implementation of a targeted educational policy can effectively reduce the gap in the level of education in the field of vocal art between large cities and less developed regions;
- strengthening the education and promotion of Bel Canto singing, as well as creating a systematic training system, can enhance the status of Bel Canto singing in the Chinese vocal art education system and ensure a balance between folk and Bel Canto singing;
- strengthening the training and development and implementation of professional development programs for Bel Canto teachers. By improving the professional level of Bel Canto teachers and developing the appropriate pedagogical skills and capabilities of teachers, the quality of vocal art education can be significantly improved;
- creation of a scientific assessment system, continuous training and appropriate professional development programs for teachers, as well as improvements in teaching methods and concepts, can break the vicious circle in the quality of Bel Canto singing education and create a favorable path for its development;
- creation of a system for the sustainable development of vocal art education, requiring support and cooperation from the Government, educational agencies and all sectors of society;
- obtaining support and guarantees, strengthening social participation, cooperation and promoting the sustainable development of vocal art education; creating a favorable atmosphere of general attention and support for vocal art education from the whole society.

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