

# Skillful Performance with Sentiment Based on Integration of Four Expressions “Lyrics, Melody, Voice and Form”

Qiu Aijing, Ban Junrong, Kong Lingbowen, Tian Rui, and Zhou Lei

**Abstract**—Vocal music is a comprehensive art with the nature of performance which aims to construct the image of music and express feelings mainly through the human voice. Singer is the carrier of emotional expression. Therefore, singing in the right performance is very important, blindly pursuing vocal singing skills and being lack of affection can only be called “technical”. The highest level of vocal singing, from the aesthetic and philosophical point of view, lies in skillful performance with sentiment – “sentiment is the basis of voice and voice the form of sentiment”. That is, to achieve an artistic appeal voice, organically combining the sound and the feeling is a necessity. The emotional expression of vocal music is directly reflected in the combination of lyrics, rhythm and melody, human voice and gesture, or the integration of “word, song, voice and form”. The organic integration of these four elements can constitute the highest level of vocal singing – skillful performance with sentiment.

**Index Terms**—Emotion, singing skills, skillful performance with sentiment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Research Background

Vocal music is a method to express feelings and moods with the use of voice and gestures. If you want to perfectly exhibit the richness of musical works, vocalists need not only to master certain singing and performing skills, but also to understand the emotional communication. They also need to apply the proper approach to vocal singing and perform the works with true feelings from the inside, so as to achieve “skillful performance with sentiment”.

When it comes to the learning of singing and performances, certain skills can be artistic. The singing skills indicate how the performers think about and pursue beauty. However, if the vocalist only focuses on the voice, the emotional expression and the related aesthetics will be ignored. If the composers do not dwell upon what they encounter in life and their inner feelings, they cannot create those well-known works. So to only focus on the skills and solid foundation of singing with insufficient emotional expression during the performance, the audience can hardly be engaged or sympathetic, which will impair the effect of touching and stirring people. Therefore, to properly understand the background of a piece of musical works and take the perspective of the character are keys to emotional expression in the vocal art.

### B. Research Status

When performing vocal works, performers need to boast perfect singing skills to arouse the sympathy from the audience. Exquisite singing skills is not a simple component, performers should play a music with their own soul, so as to integrate the skills with emotion or the voice with sentiment, and further achieve skillful performance with sentiment. There are a lot of researches on how to realize skillful performance with sentiment. In “On Dialectical Relationship between Emotion and Skills in Vocal Music Performance”, Huang Renshi pointed out that “the emotion and skills in the art of vocal music are the basic knowledge that should be understood and mastered by any vocal music learner” [1].

Wu Juntie, in “Integration of Singing Art and Emotional Expression”, pointed out: “emotional expression is the proper recreation of the works by performers through training and singing and presented by dint of voice and tone color. It is an effective way to express feelings during singing.” He made an in-depth exploration into how to perfectly express the sentiment during the performance based on the research achievements by peers and the experience of other performers in his paper [2].

To sum up, it can be seen that the relevant scholars have sufficiently studied the role of skillful performance with sentiment and how to integrate skills and feelings, which serve as an effective reference base for the writing of this paper.

### C. Research Method

Documents and literature: by reading and figuring out the relevant literature, the author can grasp the progress of the subject at home and abroad and different academic points of view, so as to know more about the basic concepts and put into flexible use what is understood.

Observation: the study revolves around the actual singers and a great deal of information about the art song downloaded, so as to focus on the emotion and mood of the songs and excavate the materials required by the paper.

Theoretical analysis: theoretical analysis is also applied to the paper; with the help of relevant theoretical teaching materials, the theories of the use to “Skillful Performance with Sentiment Based on Integration of Four Expressions ‘Lyrics, Melody, Voice and Form’” will be further studied and the conclusion will be summed up.

## II. SKILLFUL PERFORMANCE WITH SENTIMENT

The so-called skillful performance with sentiment in vocal music refers to the organic combination of voice, singing skills and emotion, which enables the audience to clearly

understand the image and ideas of the music and to achieve emotional response. Only by balancing the expression of lyrics, rhythm and melody, voice and gesture can skillful performance with sentiment be achieved and make the audience feel the beauty.

*A. To Understand the Emotional Expressiveness of the Lyrics and Distinguish Pronunciations and Vocalizing Methods in Different Languages*

The largest difference among vocal music, instrumental music and other forms of music lies in its lyrics. The human voice is combined with the melody to interpret the lyrics. Lyrics is deemed as a special product of vocal art. It is frequently mentioned that art comes from life. The lyrics, then, is the artistic form of life language, which embodies the literariness of vocal music, as an important part of the song and the direct expression of emotions. Lyricists endow the works with distinctive artistic images and make the lyrics compatible with rhythm, accent and genre. Only with a vivid language and distinctive image can the lyrics stimulate the rich imagination from the audiences and help them understand the purpose of the works – emotional expression and musical images. Therefore, the singers have to conduct an in-depth study and analysis of the works to be performed, and fully understand the creation background and the emotions it wants to express.

For example, the famous Italian song "O sole mio" (My Sun) was created in 1898 in Naples. Some people think that it is a love song – the lover of Capua is his sun. Whereas, others think that "my sun" refers to the smile of the lover. Capua compared the beautiful smile of the lover to "the sun", in order to express his loyalty to love. Also, according to some statements, it tries to extol the brotherhood of man. Because there is no record on its creation background, we know nothing about what the "sun" actually refers to. To compare different versions of "My Sun", you will find that "My Sun", when sung in the Napoli dialect, is delicate and graceful, but powerful and magnificent in many other languages. The difference comes from the different interpretations of the word "sun" in the lyric.

Secondly, lyricists are from different backgrounds and speak different languages including dialects, which lead to the different ways of vocalizing and pronouncing. Singers should not only perform with clear articulation and a mellow and full tune to make it clear for the audience, but also know the meaning and pronunciation in a language. For example, to perform certain songs with national characteristics and words unique to a nation, singers must understand the true meaning and pronunciation of the vocabulary as the only way to comprehend the true feelings.

*B. To Specify the Expressiveness of Rhythm and Melody and Know How to Express the Mood in Different Cases*

Singers will carry on a sight-seeing after proper interpretation of the lyrics and background. Sight-seeing is not simply about the right pitch and rhythm; more importantly, the emotional elements should be displayed according to its rhythm and melody. Different rhythms indicate different feelings; for example, fast-paced rhythm implies anxiety, slow rhythm implies a quiet, peaceful atmosphere, and the three-beat one is commonly seen in

dance music. Most melodies and rhythms, the same as lyrics, are derived from life, the refinement and the reflection of life.

For example, "Child of Havana" is characterized by a certain rhythmic pattern by drawing the rhythmic elements from the Cuban dance music. The folk song "The Turpan Grapes Are Ripe" is imbued with the features of the Uyghur nationality due to its geographical source. All the rhythms that can be perceived in reality are used as the basis of the works, so that the music may manifest the characters and even the characteristics of the whole nation. University of California experimented with the senses to perceive melody and color with the same piece of classical orchestral music. The study shows that the colors that Americans and Mexicans can associate the music with are the same. The researchers provided the participants with 37 colors and found that people usually link the music with fast-paced rhythms to light yellow or orange and that with slow rhythms to dark blue shades.

Melody can convey the sentimental color in a richer and more direct manner. The continuously rising and discordant harmony will make people feel emotional and contradictory, while the declining minor second is often used to express lament. It can be seen that to grasp the rhythm and melody is very important for that they make the emotions perceivable. Singers need to figure out the emotional colors emanating from different rhythms and melodies. Singers should give appropriate expression to them with their vocal skills to the largest extent so as to enable the audience to feel the difference.

*C. To Highlight the Expressiveness of Human Voice and Change the Tone Colors Accordingly*

The expressiveness of voice is the most important factor in deciding whether the vocal music is successfully performed. Solid basic skills are the key. First of all, during the vocal performance, performers must master the right breathing skills, and adapt their mood and the breath to emotions, so as to be engaged in the work. Initially, learning the breathing skills requires imagination.

The good things and feelings in lyric songs will make the singers widen the mouth and breathe deeply. Sad songs make one want to cry, and the singers need to adjust the breath to imitate the sobbing tone. Breathing also needs the emotional support – some inhalations are full of joy, and some are sad. It is necessary to practice the duration and strength of breathing, so as to sufficiently demonstrate the feelings during the performance [3].

In addition to the basic breathing skills, the color tone of voice should also not be ignored. Diverse tones are important means to express the ideas and to build images of the music. Human voice can be trained. The famous singer in China Wu Bixia is a successful example. She is capable of singing Hebei Bangzi, Henan opera, Western opera, Chinese folk songs, those originated from folk songs and so on. [4]

We all know that artistic creation is changeable and flexible, full of passion and imagination. Although each piece of the works and the performance of singers are subject to certain limitations in terms of emotion and significance, the vocal art still admits passion and imagination. Singers should not only follow the principle of reality. To perform the works

is a necessity. Furthermore, the performers should recreate to infuse their own creativity and imagination into the song, which requires certain attainment. They need to comprehensively understand and master the works, so as to conduct recreation while maintaining the original style. In fact, the basis of singing lies in the imagination of the singer. In order to make their emotions in the show more vivid, touching and vigorous, and enable the audience to notice the emotional changes, imagination is no doubt necessary. "Reasonable imagination is the basis of vocal performance, which promotes the unity of "voice" and "sentiment" [5].

*D. To Enrich the Facial and Gestural Expressiveness, and Properly Employ the Facial Expressions and Actions*

Singers should have not only good basic skills and techniques, but also the capability of combining body and spirit for stage performance. We all know that singing is a performing art with expressiveness. Perfect singing is not only about the expression through voice, but also relying on the singer's demeanor, expression, action, etc. to express feeling and shape the image of the musical piece. Otherwise, the performance will appear to be boring and dull, unable to make the audience fit into the mood and the artistic atmosphere.

It attaches great importance to the musical and opera fields. For the cultivation of musical and opera singers, the focus is placed on singing skills, as well as dance and performance. Similarly, despite that many vocal works do not require as much dance and act as musicals or opera, the vocalists still need to convey the feelings and ideas to the audience through their expressions and actions.

A good singer should, the most importantly, sing well on the stage, and take on proper gestures to engage the audience. If not trained in this way and with gestures in disorder, they cannot sufficiently deliver the feelings and ideas. Therefore, the singers should do shape-up exercises and learn about dancing.

*E. To Pay Attention to the Cultivation of Culture and Art*

The artists' cultural accomplishment, in addition to the above mentioned lyric, melody, voice and form, is mirrored in their ability to move the audience with proper emotional expression. "Cultural accomplishment refers to a person's understand of the society and culture" – a successful singer must have certain cultural and artistic accomplishment, the ability to think independently, his or her own knowledge system in a macroscopic scale, the correct outlook on life and values, and high ideals in the cultural and art fields.

Culture and art attainment is based on learning and life experience. One can make certain achievements only after hardened by life and constantly accumulating knowledge – the only way to show his or her mind and temperament [6]. Singing is about how to wield skills. No matter how profound and complex the skills are, they can be mastered with continuous efforts. Singers, however, should not only master the skills, but also turn them into art instead of making them technical.

In characteristics, singing art is categorized as a music culture to manifest the physical and emotional experience of people, and a product of the whole human civilization.

Therefore, we need to, besides learning the skills of vocal singing, thoroughly mobilize our cultural accomplishment and discover our unique singing styles and methods with constant reflections and learning.

For the vocal music, to grasp the meaning and sentiment of each song instead of the superficial performance is the other artistic way to manifest the cultural and artistic attainment of any singers with high quality [7]. It can be seen that the artists' accomplishment constitutes the fundament of their performance and represents their level, standing and performance quality and to what extent the song is expressed. Singers must be well cultivated and equipped with the knowledge about humanities, art and culture, so as to comprehensively understand the song itself, figure out the inner feelings of the composer by interpreting every sentence and word, and thus improve the emotional expressiveness of music [8].

### III. ACHIEVEMENTS IN PRACTICE

By studying and practicing the integrated expression of "lyric, melody, voice and form," it aims to train students on how to skillfully perform with sentiment and bring the visual and auditory beauty to the audience. In recent years, fruitful achievements have been made in this regard. Students have made tremendous progress in vocal singing, and their potential in dancing and stage performance sufficiently excavated, for which they have won many trophies in the provincial, national and international competitions.

Yu Shurui won the third prize in the "vocal competition for college students" held by Jiangsu TV.

Zhang Qixiang won the second prize in the "artistic performance for college students (professional team)" in Jiangsu Province.

Cai Meng won the bronze medal in the "Hengshun Cup" youth singer competition in the Yangtze River Delta region.

Zhang Qixiang won the first prize in the singer competition for colleges directly under the General Logistics Department (folk style singing team).

Li Qian won the silver award in the international Chinese vocal music competition for institutions of higher education (folk style singing) in the 5th International Chinese Arts Festival (Singapore).

Wang Lili won the gold medal in the youth singer competition of the Yangtze River Delta region.

This year, Sun Jialin, who has learned dancing from childhood and was seldom exposed to vocal music before attending the university, has made some achievements in vocal music with four years of systematic cultivation. It is praiseworthy that she integrates the elements of dancing into vocal performances, so as to form her unique style. Before graduation, Sun Jialin managed to hold a solo concert and wonderfully performed the classical pieces from "Phantom of the Opera" and "Cats" that put her singing skills and showmanship to the greatest test, and harvested applause. Sun Jialin has received an invitation letter from the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi di Torino in Italy to be a master candidate in opera.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, "skillful performance with sentiment" is the soul of vocal music. Therefore, how to integrate the emotion perfectly into the performance is worthy of further study and research. It requires the singers to start from the song itself, and conduct in-depth study based on their own experience. The sentiment of a song comes from the real life and production. Everything in the song is closely related to our life. The artistic embellishment including creation, composition, practice, recreation, and sharing with the audience is complicated and requires performers to know about the creation background, grasp and change the tone colors according to different rhythms and melodies, and recreate based on the rich imagination. A successful performer must be one with good cultural and artistic attainment. By integrating his or her own sentiment into the song, the emotion of the audience is first aroused before it is sung. Only in this way can the audience be moved by the sincerest performance and be totally engaged in the musical piece.

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area is vocal music.

**Qiu Aijing** was born in Fujian, China on November 28, 1978. She received her M.S. degree in vocal pedagogy from Shanghai Musical College, Shanghai, China, in 2009. She is now a vocal lecturer at Nanjing University of Aeronautics & Astronautics, Nanjing, China. She has published a book –The education of vocal singing in major of singing and dancing (Nanjing, China, Spring Art Publishing House, 2013). Her current main research

**Ban Junrong** was born in Nanjing, China on April 1, 1973. He is now a professor at Nanjing University of Aeronautics & Astronautics.



**Kong Lingbowen** was born in Wuhan, China on October 8, 1996. She is now an undergraduate majoring in music performance in Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Nanjing, China.



**Tian Rui** was born in Nanjing, China on January 1, 1997. She is now an undergraduate majoring in music performance in Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Nanjing, China.



**Zhou Lei** was born in Yangzhou, China on January 9, 1998. She is now an undergraduate majoring in music performance in Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Nanjing, China.