

## THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE NATIONAL VOCAL MUSIC FOR TEACHING IN THE MODERN CHINA

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### Abstract

Research purposes are: 1. To know the origin of Chinese national vocal music. 2. To understand the Chinese national vocal music concept. 3. To know the development of Chinese national vocal contemporary music teaching in China. 4. To know the prospect of Chinese national vocal music teaching.

Research methodology is a documentary studies and surveying research mixed method. Research tool is an interviewing form to interview two key informants, generated data and analyzing by descriptive analysis.

Research results were: 1. the origin of Chinese national vocal music was the daily life singing of Chinese and ethnic people and transmitted by oral tradition as well as influenced of western vocal music. 2. Concept of Chinese singing art is a comprehensive singing with national language rhyme, and emotional charming with sound and word. 3. The Chinese national vocal music teaching began in 1919; while western bel-canto was gradually introduced into China, later the "National Singing Class" was established in Shenyang Conservatory of Music, then become a stage of mutual integration in educational system of modern national vocal music. 4. The Chinese national vocal music teaching was constantly progress along with global acculturation; it is an inevitable combined with the current cultural trend.

**Keywords:** Chinese national vocal music, Teaching method, Development

### Background and importance of the problem

Even traditional Chinese music both in traditional style and in contemporary style is widely used in Chinese society, but the Origin and Development of Chinese national vocal music for teaching in the modern China is not well known. The researcher studied to find out on this knowledge.

Singing in China is now both traditional and modern singing. Influenced by a western choir called "Bel Kanto" which has principles of systematic learning process. There are Western documents to study able to learn. At present, Chinese singing lessons with the "Bel canto" technique are found in educational institutions all over China. but at the same time found Very few people know how to sing Chinese songs using traditional singing techniques. Teaching is in a small group of people, not teaching in educational institutions. It was found that the present singing teachers do not have knowledge and understanding of principles, techniques and methods of applying traditional singing principles in learning. learn to sing. This will result in the ancient Chinese singing technique gradually disappearing due to lack of knowledgeable teachers. and its application. Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying the principles of Chinese traditional singing process. do an analysis Summarize as a body of knowledge and bring that knowledge to integrate with modern singing. A contemporary style of singing was born. that allows youth and teachers to sing Chinese songs in both old and new ways or integrated.



### Research objectives

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### Conceptual framework

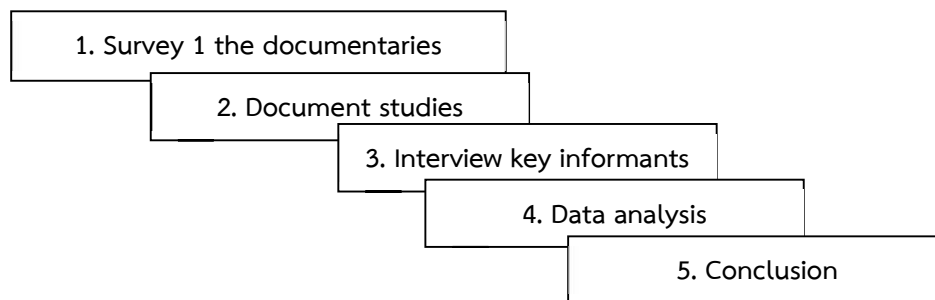


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Author

### Research methodology

The research methodology is a qualitative research consists of two phrase, Phrase one; documents studies. Study about type of Vocal technic in China from past to present. Genre of the songs, The well-known professional in vocal area. Conclusion and select key informants Phrase Two; construction the survey interview from. Contact and interviewing key informants. Conclusion the result.

### Key informant

The two key informants are Mr. Jin Tielin and Mrs. Ma Qiuhua: Mr. Jin Tielin is a professor at the China academy of music in reviewing predecessor's vocal artist and educator in Chinese traditional vocalist and western science in exploring the road of combining vocal music theory, summarizing the results of previous experience lesson, a series of innovation and breakthrough progress has been made.



**Figure 2:** Mr. Jin Tielin

**Source:** baike.baidu (<https://baike.baidu.com/item/金铁霖/816268?fr=aladdin>).



**Figure 3:** Mrs. Ma Qiuhua

**Source:** baike.baidu (<https://baike.baidu.com/item/马秋华/816741?fr=aladdin>).

Mrs. Ma Qiuhua is a professor of China Conservatory of Music, who is the pilot of the diversity teaching of Chinese national vocal music, put forward four principles of "scientific nature", "national nature", "cultural nature" and "fashion type" based on Mr. Jin's theory.

### Research result

The data was analyzed by descriptive analysis.

1. The Chinese national vocal music was originated by ancient Chinese oriental civilization with a vast territory with long history and a large population. In thousands of years of history, the people of all ethnic groups have left a rich and valuable cultural heritage, Chinese national vocal music art is one of the brilliant spiritual wealth. It comes from the field, from life, from the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in the practice of singing. It takes root in China's land, germinates, through the way of oral transmission, and in China's land inheritance and development, is an important tool for people to express their feelings.

According to the records of Lu's spring and Autumn Annals, the development history of national vocal music can be traced back to the ancient times of the Yellow Emperor (Lu Buwei, 2016). Our ancestors began their singing in hunting, sacrifice, ritual, carrying, courtship and other activities. For the definition of Chinese

national vocal music, dynasties have different interpretations. It has experienced thousands of years of development and evolution in China, experienced the baptism of a great cultural integration, and was influenced by western vocal music culture in modern times, thus came into being the "national singing method". The "national singing method" was originally put forward and defined to be similar to the western foreign "belcanto" ["belcanto "is derived from the Italian" belcanto ", which means beautiful sound. After it was widely recognized in China, it was called "belcanto" for short.] It is a concentrated reflection of the Chinese traditional singing method looking for its own positioning in the modern vocal theory.



**Figure 4-5:** Stills of Chinese Peking Opera and Italian Opera,  
**Source:** Photos from Xinmin Evening News.

**2. The Chinese national vocal music concept.** The concept and definitions of Chinese national vocal music in different dynasties have different explanations. It has experienced thousands of years of development and evolution in China and experienced the baptism of a great cultural integration. At the same time, influenced by western vocal culture in modern times, it is difficult to define the music type and style of any period as a standard.

In the encyclopedia of China, Music and Dance, the researcher searched for an item related to national vocal music, "Chinese singing art", and pointed out that, "Chinese singing art is a comprehensive singing with national singing method as the main body, national language as the basis, rhyme and charm as the specialty, and the emotion, sound and word cavity that are integrated with body performance. In the long course of development, it has formed the principle of the second creation that is, expressing emotion and emotion, expressing both words and forms, combining singing and dancing. (Encyclopedia of China Press, 1989, p. 857)

Ding Yaxian wrote in selected Songs for The Teaching of National Vocal Music, "National vocal music does not refer to all kinds of singing techniques in Our country, such as folk songs, talking-singing music, Chinese opera and new songs. It is a relatively narrow concept. Specifically, it is our country music (art) represented in the national vocal music specialty, is different from folk songs, talking-singing music, Chinese opera singing, and sing in inherit and carry forward the traditional artistic essence and characteristic, on the basis of reference,



absorbs the Western Europe bel canto singing theory, and a bit of a unique, scientific, nationality, artistry and time spirit feature of the new folk song art. (Ding Yaxian, 1995, p.3)

Jiang Jiaxiang, in exploration of National Singing method, believes that "National singing method, broadly speaking, can include Chinese opera, Quyi, Folk Songs and singing methods of creating songs with these three styles. Here refers to the national singing method as a narrow sense of understanding, if it refers to the singing style of strong vocal works used in the technical methods and some rules. They are refined and inherited from the traditional singing techniques of Chinese opera and folk songs, and at the same time they draw lessons from and absorb the excellent results of western singing. (Jiang Jiaxiang, 1979, p.29)

From the above discussion, it shown two concepts of national vocal music: traditional and modern, and their scope is different.

2.1 Development of traditional Chinese national vocal music. In the traditional sense, Chinese national vocal music mainly refers to the traditional musical art forms including Chinese opera, quyi, folk songs and so on. The musical life of Chinese ancestors was probably born naturally in the early Stone Age in the daily working environment of hunting and picking. At the earliest, industrious people would call or croon in different rhythm to express different feelings of work or life after work, which is the original singing and the oldest folk songs. With the change of times and the rapid development of society, our singing methods have also changed greatly, and the content of folk songs has been continuously specialized from the original rhythmic crooning. After thousands of years of continuous development, evolution and integration, Chinese traditional vocal music has formed a unique vocal music singing and performance style of the Chinese nation, the Chinese traditional vocal music art is extensive and profound, rich heritage can be seen. China is a multi-ethnic country, the geographical environment, social atmosphere, customs, and cultural background of each ethnic group are different, which makes the traditional folk songs of our country show the characteristics of diversification.

Traditional Chinese opera is a comprehensive art form that integrates music, dance and drama. As China is a multi-ethnic country, the traditional opera has the characteristics of diversity, and each ethnic region has its own unique traditional opera. Among them, Peking Opera, which combines singing, reading, doing, fighting and other basic skills, can best represent the traditional Chinese opera art.

Quyi talking-singing refers to the main performance in the process of: speaking with singing, singing with speaking, talking-singing combination, that is, the alternation of the two forms of reciting and singing, and it has both narrative and lyric functions of music has become a feature of it. According to relevant records, the form of Quyi speech-singing developed greatly in the Ming and Qing Dynasties and was deeply loved by the people at that time.

Folk songs are the powerful driving force for the development of Chinese national vocal music, which promotes the development and evolution of national vocal music. Popular view, the northern folk songs are generally passionate, heroic, the south is implicit, indirect. According to different genres, folk songs can be divided into the following forms: labor song, folk song, and minor tune.

2.2 Modern Chinese national vocal music in modern idea is Chinese national vocal music is an updated level developed based on traditional national vocal music, which mainly refers to the singing methods of national vocal music in Chinese music colleges and universities. While inheriting and developing the essence of Chinese traditional vocal music art form, it is a modern Chinese national vocal music art form with the characteristics of western music formed by absorbing western scientific sound method in the process of development.

After the end of the Great Cultural Revolution and the resumption of the National College Entrance Examination, major music colleges and universities began to recruit students and set up national vocal music majors, and officially began to cultivate talent for singing and teaching national vocal music. The singing method of this period began to learn from the singing skills of bel canto, with unified vocal area and bright tone color, and the mixing of true and false voices began to become the mainstream of public aesthetics. These aspects of the enhancement, so that the singer's skills have been greatly improved, the selection of works has greatly broadened, in addition, but also retained the charm and characteristics of traditional folk songs, formed a more scientific and nationalized singing style.

Vocal music workers who have returned from abroad have tried to teach national vocal music, learning while teaching. In the long-term teaching practice, a relatively scientific and complete national vocal music teaching system has been gradually produced, and many excellent national vocal music singers have been trained. With the change of The Times, the national vocal music is making continuous progress towards more and more scientific and national progress.

**3. The development of Chinese national vocal contemporary music teaching in China.** The development of Chinese national vocal contemporary music teaching in China has six aspects as following:

3.1 The school songs: The transformation of Chinese national vocal music began with School Song music. In modern China, under the aggression of western powers, more and more young people studying abroad realized that to fundamentally change the backward face of China, we must start from changing people's thinking. And "School Song music" is one of the important things. (Liang Qichao, 1959, P58) School music is a singing culture rising with the establishment of new schools, generally refers to the school music classes, which is the embryonic stage of vocal music education in China.

Around 1903, educated young people represented by Shen Xingong returned from Japan and started singing classes in primary and secondary schools in Shanghai and other places. They composed songs to popularize and spread the basic knowledge, musical techniques and expression of western music. In its earliest days, it was a kind of song with lyrics selected from songs, which were composed by returned overseas students with tunes from Japan and Europe and America, such as Li Shutong's "Farewell" and Shen Xingong's "Gymnastics - soldier exercises". (Wang Shuhe, 2005, P43)

In the 1920s, in order to better adapt to the music education in China, schoolhouse music developed into the way of "composing according to words". This period is represented by Xiao Youmei and Zhao Yuanren.

Zhao Yuanren made great contributions to the creation of solo and multi-part songs. (Wang Shuhe, 2005, P43) His works have a strong national style, and at the same time, he borrowed from the western art song creation techniques, leaving many classic works for later generations, such as "teach me how not to think of him", "selling cloth ballads" and so on. The works of this period are now known as "art songs". It is now one of the repertoire types that colleges and universities must sing for professional vocal talent training.

The popularization of school music introduced western Musical Instruments, performing methods, notation and music theory into China, and imperceptibly influenced Chinese people's musical aesthetic habits in the process of singing, and brought people a brand-new concept in singing methods and music creation. As a new variety in the history of Chinese music, it has laid a theoretical and practical foundation for the development of modern national vocal music and made a psychological foundation for the later Chinese national vocal music to complete the transformation from traditional national vocal music to modern national vocal music by referring to western bel canto singing method, and it is also the formal germination of Chinese vocal music education.

3.2 The beginning of Chinese national vocal music teaching. After the May 4th New Culture Movement in 1919, western bel-canto was gradually introduced into China. In 1927, Xiao Youmei founded Shanghai National Music College. He hired foreign vocal teachers and Zhou Shuan and Zhao Meibo who had returned from overseas study, and professional bel canto teaching was officially launched. On the basis of teaching bel canto, the teachers at Shanghai College of Music devoted themselves to the research on the nationalization of vocal music teaching. From then on, they began to study and explore the scientific nature and localization of Chinese vocal music.

With the promotion of bel canto in China, more and more people like western bel canto. This makes the development of thousands of years of traditional Chinese national vocal music has been greatly impacted, "native", "foreign" two singing methods of collision and integration has become an inevitable trend. It is also an important turning point for the development of Chinese national vocal music from tradition to modernity. (Hu Yuqing, 2007, p14)

3.3 The formation of modern Chinese national vocal music teaching. In 1956, the Communist Party of China put forward the fundamental policy of "letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend", encouraging musicians to inherit and carry forward the traditional vocal music art of China and actively draw on the advanced experience of the West, which fully encouraged musicians to create the enthusiasm of the school of Chinese vocal music. Li Jiefu established the "National Singing Class" in Shenyang Conservatory of Music, which is the starting point of the teaching of Chinese national vocal music. (Hu Yuqing, 2007, p14)

In 1957, the National Vocal Music Teaching Conference was held in Beijing, which was an important moment in the development of Chinese national vocal music teaching. The meeting settled the dispute between the two singing methods. It is clearly proposed that we should thoroughly study and fully master the



traditional singing method of Europe and combine it with the traditional art form of China and the Chinese musical culture and aesthetic appreciation. Since then, Chinese vocal music workers have had a basic unity in their ideological understanding, and the national singing method and bel canto singing method have developed from a tit-for-tat relationship to a complementary relationship that should be learned from each other and improved together. (Han Xuejing, 2007, P4)

After that, Shenyang Conservatory of Music, China Conservatory of Music, Shanghai Conservatory of Music and so on has established Chinese National Vocal Singing majors. (Li Huanzhi, 1997, P350) This marked the initial formation of China's higher professional music education. The college requires vocal music teachers to master at least one form of traditional Chinese vocal music, pay attention to the study of traditional Chinese vocal music, such as opera, and strive to integrate the scientific methods of the Bel Canto based on preserving the essence of national singing, open up a new way of teaching. During this period, Chinese national vocal music and western bel canto singing entered the stage of mutual integration, and the teaching system of Chinese modern national vocal music was formed. (Li Ping, 1957, P. 233)

3.4 The development of Chinese national vocal music teaching: After the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, China ushered in the reform and opening, the national college entrance examination was resumed, the major music and art colleges resumed the enrollment of music majors, and the teaching of national vocal music in China finally ushered in a vigorous spring. The professional music education has achieved great development and formed a complete system with reasonable geographical distribution, distinctive features, and complete educational functions, which is composed of nine major music colleges, including China Conservatory of Music, Shanghai Conservatory of Music and Xinghai Conservatory of Music. Huang Youkui, Yu Yixuan, Zhou Xiaoyan, Lang Yuxiu and other vocal artists, educators hard worked in the teaching and research front line. A considerable part of them is studying the western vocal music theory skills assiduously, but also concentrate on the language characteristics of Chinese national singing method, explore the way to establish the Chinese national vocal music school, for the new period of our country vocal music art prosperity has made an indelible contribution. (Song Zuying, 2012, P8)

The teaching of contemporary Chinese national vocal music is dominated by the theoretical basis of modern western music and has a complete teaching system and teaching methods. It is completely different from the teaching form of national vocal music in ancient China or the traditional period, and it has got rid of the old mode of oral transmission and tutoring between teachers and apprentice. This makes the teaching of Chinese folk vocal music have great development. (Meng Xinyang, 2009, P264) In connection with the world vocal music education at the same time to get into account the traditional Chinese vocal music education. No matter from the national language characteristic or the National Esthetic charm all displays the good theory and the practice achievement. The great development of vocal music education makes the major music colleges and normal colleges call the important position of modern Chinese national vocal music, which has laid a solid foundation for the development of modern national vocal music art.

3.5 The Chinese national vocal music teaching system that represented by China Conservatory of Music: In the 1980 s, the founder of the Chinese national vocal music.





(Song Zuying, 2012, P.8) It has created a set of national vocal music teaching system with Chinese cultural characteristics, reflecting national spirit and advancing with The Times. He put forward the four principles of "scientific nature", "national nature", "artistic nature" and "contemporary nature", and also put forward the seven standard characters of "sound, emotion, character, taste, appearance, nourishing and image". (Liu Lin, 2003, P49) Cultivated a batch of excellent singers, and in the domestic and foreign competitions repeatedly won awards. Such as Li Guyi, Peng Liyuan, Song Zuying, Zhang Ye, Yan Weiwen, Lv Jihong and so on, some of these excellent singers are still active on the national stage for a long time, and some of them are now experts and professors in the national music colleges, contributing their own strength to the spread of Chinese national vocal music. The teaching of national vocal music in Jin Tielin is a set of sufficiently complete and mature teaching system, which establishes the singing methods of national vocal music in each learning stage, and keeps adjusting, updating and developing according to the changes of The Times.

3.6 Diversified teaching system of Chinese national vocal music in the 21st century. In the 21st century, the world has entered a pluralistic modern society, the economy and culture of all countries in the world are rapidly blending, and the aesthetic standards of music circles are also undergoing earth shaking changes. The teaching of traditional national vocal music needs to keep pace with the times and integrate with diversified economy. The singing style of Chinese national vocal music in the new century combines the essence of Bel Canto and various operas, which makes the national vocal music more colorful. Among many educators, Professor Ma Qiuhua of China Conservatory of music is the most representative. (Ma Qiuhua, 2011, P3) In terms of teaching forms and methods, combine scientific singing with the diversity of singing, teach students in accordance with their aptitude, avoid repeating the old mechanical way, and have the courage to innovate in teaching. According to his years of teaching experience, Professor Ma Qiuhua put forward "the diversity theory of Chinese vocal music teaching" (Ma Qiuhua, 2016, P1)

The proposal of diversity makes the concept of modern Chinese national vocal music in a relatively narrow sense of the concept of a more extensive interpretation, expand the teaching ideas of teachers and broaden the song path of singers. In addition to the composition songs, art songs, folk songs and national operas taught by musicology institutes, it also includes the contents of traditional Chinese national vocal music, such as opera, opera song and folk speech-singing. These makes the national vocal music based on scientific, has more possibilities, cultivate more diversified singing ability of outstanding vocal talent, Chinese national vocal music teaching development has a scientific and aesthetic guiding significance, is an important part of the whole Chinese national vocal music.

**4. The Prospect of Chinese National Vocal Music Teaching.** With the development of history and the progress of society, under the background of more and more frequent exchanges of vocal music education and culture of all nationalities in the world, the art and culture of all nationalities are integrated and used for reference and have made great progress. Absorbing the essence of foreign vocal music, retaining the quintessence of China's national vocal music and promoting the enrichment and progress of Chinese national vocal music are a big inevitable trend.

According to the research methods of Western vocal music teaching system, the particularity of Chinese vocal music and the requirements of modern discipline construction, a more detailed framework of vocal music teaching system can be constructed, as shown in the table below.

**Table 1:** Framework of vocal music teaching system

Chinese national vocal music theory course	Chinese national vocal music skills course
Physiology of national vocal music	Voice
Psychology of national vocal music	Breath
Linguistics of national vocal music	Pronunciation
National vocal music performance	Resonance

**Source:** Xie Cheng 22 November 2021

The reform of national vocal music teaching is related to many fields and disciplines. We should proceed from the actual situation of our country, according to the needs of social development, in line with the aesthetic of the times, strive to improve the national vocal music teaching system, and improve the quality of vocal music teaching, so as to enhance the overall national music quality. Chinese vocal music workers should not only be the recipients of knowledge, but also be the explorers of diversity practice of Chinese vocal music and the constructors of diversity teaching theory system of Chinese vocal music.

In view of this, as far as China's national vocal music education is concerned, theoretical summary, teaching method arrangement, academic filing, system construction, optimization and inheritance are of great importance.

In the long run of time, art is constantly developing and changing, and our nation will keep up with the pace and make continuous progress. Under the international background of close cultural exchanges in the world, it is also an inevitable trend to combine with the current cultural trend. China's national vocal music is gradually moving towards the international arena, showing people all over the world the vocal art of the Chinese nation, and accepted by people of all nationalities, it can not only adapt to the appreciation requirements of our own people, establish a vocal school with Chinese characteristics, but also be loved by people of all nationalities in the world innovatively, and show the national artistic spirit of our great Chinese nation. I believe that in the future development, the development of our national vocal music will be combined with the changing trend of the times and make more remarkable progress.

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