

# The Analysis of Chinese National Opera-Chang Yuan

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Received: March 10, 2020

Revised: June 11, 2020

Accepted: June 15, 2020

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 1) เพื่อศึกษาประวัติความเป็นมาของอุปรากรจีนชาวเหยียน 2) เพื่อวิเคราะห์บทเพลงชาวเหยียนและทักษะการแสดง โดยใช้ทฤษฎีด้านดนตรีวิทยา ทฤษฎีการขับร้องดนตรี ทฤษฎีประวัติศาสตร์ดนตรี และทฤษฎีมานุษยนตรีวิทยาในการศึกษาวิจัย ผู้วิจัยใช้ระเบียบวิจัยในการเก็บข้อมูลภาคสนาม โดยวิธีการสัมภาษณ์และสังเกตการการแสดงของศิลปินอุปรากรจีนชาวเหยียน ตลอดจนการรวบรวมข้อมูลด้านต่าง ๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้องทั้งประวัติศาสตร์และพื้นฐานเกี่ยวกับอุปรากรจีนชาวเหยียน จากนั้น วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยการเปรียบเทียบรูปแบบการแสดงในแบบเก่าและแบบใหม่ ผลการวิจัยพบว่า การแสดง อุปรากรจีนชาวเหยียนเป็นการบรรยายถึงกลุ่มชนชาติพันธุ์ที่อาศัยอยู่ในเมือง Turpan ประเทศจีน ภายใต้การปกครองของจักรพรรดิรัสเซีย ซึ่งชาวมองโกเลียได้เดินทางกลับไปยังวุ่นเฉา Tianshan ด้วยความยากลำบาก ในการแสดงอุปรากรจีนชาวเหยียนแบบเก่ามีความสลับซับซ้อนในการออกแบบพื้นฐานของการแสดง ซึ่งถูกออกแบบมาเพื่อคลาสสิกในปัจจุบัน ในการแสดงอุปรากรจีนแบบใหม่เป็นการแสดงที่มีความเหมาะสมกับการขับร้องแบบสมัยนิยมซึ่งมีพื้นฐานที่ง่ายแต่มีความลงตัว ในการวิเคราะห์เปรียบเทียบการแสดงอุปรากรจีนชาวเหยียนในด้านของจังหวะ ทำนอง เนื้อร้อง และอารมณ์ของบทเพลง เป็นความจำเป็น ในการปรับปรุงศาสตร์ของเสียงเพื่อการขับร้อง และในระหว่างกระบวนการพัฒนาการแสดงอุปรากรจีน การควบคุมวัตกรรมใหม่ และการเปลี่ยนแปลงเป็นสิ่งที่จำเป็นกับการคงไว้ซึ่งรูปแบบเดิมของการแสดงอุปรากรจีนที่ปรากฏอยู่ในประวัติศาสตร์

คำสำคัญ: ชาวเหยียน อุปรากรจีน การขับร้อง

## Abstract

The research purposes are 1) to study the history of Chinese Opera-Chang Yuan , 2) to analyze the songs and performance skills in *Chang Yuan*. The research was conducted by using the theories about musicology, vocal music performance, music history and ethnomusicology.

Data were collected by means of the interview and observation of the concert of Chinese Opera – *Chang Yuan*. The author collects the relevant data, as well as know the history and state of the Chinese Opera-*Chang Yuan*. The author classifies all data and then conducts the analysis on the stage performance style by comparing the old and new operas.

The research findings were as follows. The *Chang Yuan* describes the history of the tribe in Turpan. Under the pressure of the Russian emperor, a Mongolian tribe returned to the Mount Tianshan. The original *Chang Yuan* opera was complicated in terms of basic design; however, it has become the classic form in the present time.

In the analysis of the *Chang Yuan*, the comparison of different performance skills shall be made from the aspects of beat, melody, lyrics, and emotion. It is necessary to adapt the scientific sound to perform vocal music. During the process of the development of Chinese opera, it is necessary to conduct innovation and transformation with remaining the original appearance of the historical story.

In a new version of the Chinese opera, the performance is suitable and compatible with a modern music which is fundamentally easy and beautiful. To analyze and compare the Chinese opera under study in light of beat, melody and emotion, it was imperative to adjust the vocalization. In addition, innovations and changes were necessary; however, some forms were necessarily to be retained.

**Keywords:** *Chang Yuan*, Chinese Opera, Vocal Music

## Introduction

This opera depicts that in the history, the Torgut tribe in Mongolia cannot bear the oppression of Russian emperor so that they trekked back to the Mount Tianshan with go through hardship. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, due to the Czarist Russia expanding its power, the leader-Ubaxi Khan resolutely led the Torgut tribe which was about 170,000 populations to return to its hometown – China. During the returning process, there were numerous people killed and wounded. Finally, only about 70,000 population returned their hometown-Mount Tianshan. Based on this event, *Chang Yuan* composed the music which represents the life, love, and freedom by the music and opera which are full of distinctive national features. 1771 years, Turhute is an ancient Mongolian tribe in China. in order to get rid of the oppression of Russian empire. Turhute's leader Obshi, led the department after many hardships, the victory returned to the motherland. The return of Turhute 's department has written a brilliant chapter for consolidating the unification of China as a multi-ethnic country (Hang, 2008).

1985 years, this historical story was told radio play “run to the place where the sun rises”. Turhute all the feat of returning to the east, deeply moved the Chinese people of all ethnic groups, all over the country have donated goods, supply Turhute people. Although more than 200 years have passed, people have not forgotten the heroes of return to the, and their deeds have become the subject of enduring academic research. Many scholars at home and abroad praised the Turhute people's heroic feat of returning to the motherland. The epic of the returning heroes will be sung forever. The heroic feat of Turhute 's return created the miracle of the world-famous national migration, and shocked China and the Western that time (Zheng, 2014). 1995 years, the historical story was arranged into a Chinese national opera. Its name is *Chang Yuan*. Since its performance in 1995, *Chang Yuan* has won many national awards and become a milestone in the history of Chinese opera history. Music in the drama and the story of integration to give a shock audiovisual effect. Until now, *Chang Yuan* has appeared in the form of opera. Opera is the monologue and singing chorus and other forms of performance, livelier and more interesting. In the opera, there are a few figures, and *Chang Yuan* is no exception. In the first chapter, it narrates to burn the tent in the east. Obashi gave the powerful call to the people to stimulate their resolution to return hometown. He throwed the torch to the huge tent which represents the animosity and resolution as well as the animosity to the csar ruler and their irresistible return volition. In the second chapter, the death revived. On the boundless desert and yellow land, they are parading and Xiaoqiao is stimulating and commanding the dying people to counter the enemies. They made the drowse head and people be excited and zest being the striking vitality and fighting capacity. The will for seeking to live is indestructible. In the third chapter, there was a sudden change. Obashi held back Narengaowa and then became sworn brother and sister with her, which was mistook for “engagement” by Taijie. Aberey seize the opportunity to bring Taijie into the knot of feeling so as to make a new wave. This is a good omen for a material conflict. Chinese envoy brought a letter from governor of Xinjiang: because Taijie killed the official, the tribe must surrender Tiajie before returning. The return of the people is another strike. In the fourth chapter, brave sacrifice. This part is the important one of the opera. Narengaowa persuaded Taijie to sacrifice for the whole tribe. Because of misunderstanding the Narengaowa has changed her idea, Taijie flied into a range. The conflicts between Narengaowa and Taijie reached to the height. Narengaowa decided to die for love to show her decision at returning the heaven by giving up Taijie and constancy of her love (Liu, 2006). In the fifth chapter, the hero came back. The living and the dead returned to the Mount Tianshan in a solemn and pious way. In the opera, the author demonstrates his originality on the setting of the drama conflicts and relationships among figures. The leading character – Dalin is the supreme governor of the tribe and his psychological burden is heaviest except the power, thus he integrates the melancholy, calmness and resolution together. He examined the work carefully and countered the enemies with wisdom,

showing the great talent of the governor. His individual love to Narengaowa and brotherhood to Taijie shows his plain feelings. Finally, when the dangers of the nation fell on the shoulder of Taijie, he decided to resign the authority and give it to Taijie. Because he could not leave the organization for his own life. It not only demonstrates Dalin's self-sacrifice spirit but also shows his courage and wisdom (Wang, 2014). According to my singing skill in Chinese opera, I interested to look forward how is the change in the history of Chinese national opera-Chang Yuan and to find the musical aspects in the song and singing skill that influenced by the western countries. Thus, this research will benefit for the young generation in China.

### Research Objectives

1. To study the history of Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan*.
2. To analyze Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan* songs and singing skills Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan*.

### Scope of Research

1. Research area: Libraries and concert halls and the relevant music research institutions of Sichuan Conservatory of Music, China. I collected the data from the library and the concert. Also, interviewed opera singing teachers who worked in Sichuan Conservatory of Music.
2. Research contents: Chinese national opera history, vocal songs in opera *Chang Yuan*, and comparison of old and new versions. There are two famous songs in the opera *Chang Yuan*. The one is "you are the beautiful sun on the grassland", the other is the "love song", I compared different versions of the same song in the Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan* from aspects such as singing skills, costumes, and stage.

### Research Methodology

I used the methods of musicology and vocal performance stage effects theory, music historiography and ethnomusicology. I adopted the method of musicology to analyze and study the vocal songs in the Chinese national opera-*Chang Yuan* in terms of melody and beat. Vocal stage performance like other performing arts, vocal stage performance is an artistic creation with the help of language and body movements. Because stage performance is very important in opera, I focused on the study of stage body movements, and singing skills in this paper, and I used the theory of stage performance to analyze the opera *Chang Yuan*. Because Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan* is a large-scale opera, based on a real historical story, the research of music history has left a lot of pictures and videos. I studied these historical videos to compare the old, and new versions of the same song. In the process of ethnomusicology research, the

application of methods largely determined the progress in breadth and depth. *Chang Yuan* Chinese national opera was originally a national opera, so I used the ethnic music research theory to study opera, and the research methods of ethnomusicology include field investigation. Therefore, I conducted field research in Music College as well as interview the opera teaching and singing teacher.

By consulting historical literature, the theoretical basis of music and method of ethnomusicology were applied to study this paper. Historical documents were sourced from library books and historical data sites. The data was mainly selected from the relevant websites of the Music Colleges and universities as well as some domestic arts related to music journals and news websites.

1. Collecting Data: Collecting data was a method to comprehensively and correctly understand and master the research problems according to certain research purposes or topics and to obtain data through a literature survey. I could learn about the history and present situation of Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan*. Form an impression of the study of opera and contribute was for observations and interviews. A comparison of real-life opera data was available. It helped me to understand the opera in its totality.

2. Field research: I interviewed the relevant singing teachers Ms. Wu Jing, and singing teachers Ms. Pan Hui. Wu Jing is very famous in Sichuan. She has sung and taught songs from the *Chang Yuan* opera. She is an academic vocal music teacher who can introduce and analyze Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan* from many aspects. Pan Hui is a member of the Sichuan Musician's Association. Pan Hui has performed in Chinese national opera-*Chang Yuan*, for many times and has rich experience in performance and singing. The reason for me to choose these two teachers, because they have both sung vocal songs from the opera *Chang Yuan*. With contrasting the old and new versions of the Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan*, I found that there are different styles of interpretation of the song, learned more details about *Chang Yuan*, understood and mastered the relevant skills of vocal music singing. I also watched the concert to compare the differences between singing skill, and emotional processing, record and take notes.

3. Data analysis: Selecting two famous vocal songs in Chinese opera *Chang Yuan* as the samples and conduct the relevant analysis. The name of the one song is "Love Song" and the name of the other is "You are the beautiful sun on the grassland". These are both the solo selecting from the opera. I conducted the analysis on the rhythm, melody, lyrics, emotional expression, and compared the singing skills of different opera singers as well as compared Chinese national opera-*Chang Yuan* for the different forms of stage representation, old and new.

4. Evaluation: As a way of integrating data and analysis. I combined all the above methods to make a detailed study and analysis of Chinese opera. To contrast the old and new versions of Chinese national opera-*Chang Yuan*, I compared different singing techniques stage and finally draw my own conclusion.

## Results

By consulting books and interviewing the opera teachers, the relevant results are follows:

1. The analyzing of the vocal music, singing skills, the inheritance and innovation of *Chang Yuan opera* are focused on the perspective of rhythm, melody, lyrics, and emotion also in the paper analyzes of the two famous songs in the Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan*. The ability for analyzing vocal music is necessary for every vocal music research. The research on songs is a favor to the performance and sing of the songs. There are two famous songs in the Chinese national opera-Chang Yuan, respectively “Love Song” and “You are the beautiful sun on the grassland.”

The introduction of 1-7 subsections of “Love Song”, the beat is starting from weak beat in the time signature 4/4. The adagio, broken chord and accompany texture demonstrates a quite Love Song which is featured by lyric. The motivation of showing the right-hand melody in the theme song aims to enhance the sadness of the song. Finally, the final part is introduced from the melody of F major triad and arpeggio.

The “Love Song” is the theme song of *Chang Yuan*. The opera adopts the Western bel canto and form of opera performance. In the creation of this opera, the form of narration and arioso are adopted. For the music language, it refers to the creation method of the Western opera so as to integrate with the Chinese national music style. The Love Song is the aria to express the miss emotion. The author mainly applies the Mongolian music style to shape the image of the heroine. The sorrowful feelings are expressed by the beautiful love song melody and calm mentality. In addition, adding the exquisite design of the composer, the song stresses the feature of arioso for expressing the emotion to show the feelings in the opera. The “Love Song” is the representative of the arioso for expressing the emotion. Its melody always resounds in the mind.

The “You are the beautiful sun on the grassland” is selected from the opera *Chang Yuan*, which has a large and single trilogy of opening words, connection, and long end tone. The entire song consists of 126 subsections and is composed of a single beat in the time signature 2/4. It is a Key signature in C Minor and changes into the D Major, D Minor, G Minor, E Minor and back to C Minor finally. The frequent change expresses the tense atmosphere of the song and the conflicts within the leading character.

The opening words (1-7 subsections): starting from a Key signature in C Minor. The opening works is quite powerful and accompanied by piano with left hand tremolo and right-hand melody. During the process, the right and left hand part change in a subsection and the chord is always the primary chord. Including, when changing the part, the left hand using the linear chord decline 2 regions which are changed from median-high to median-low, increasing the heaviness sense to the music image.

2. *Chang Yuan opera* has different versions of stage performance and singing skills. Through the analysis of opera - *Chang Yuan*, I learned the different stage background of

*Chang Yuan* as well as compared the different performance skills. In the past, the audience watched all kinds of performances on stage, but today, everything is improved, stage designer has broken through the traditional shackles and limit. Three-dimensional, human nature more theater stage is allowed the audience to feel, audience and lands relationship has thoroughly changed. Performance is becoming more and more integrated into the audience. I believe that further strengthening and improvement of the setting technology, the stage performance technique will be more diverse, the stage will become more and more beautiful.

For the clothing in the old *Chang Yuan*, more attention is paid to restoring historical culture. In the new *Chang Yuan*, the clothing closer to the modern cultural aesthetic, which is simple and elegant. As for the light set, in the old *Chang Yuan*, it is very dark heavy, leaving person a kind of oppressive feeling, a kind of solemn and stirring atmosphere; but in the new one, it is much more bright, which make each performer's mood appear in front of the audience. Although the light sets are not change too much, it is much more peaceful. With respect to the process of performance, in the old *Chang Yuan*, more attention is paid to emotional expression, and drama performance is the main; but in the new version, of *Chang Yuan* more attention is paid to singing, the performance of the song is much more complete, and sounds more beautiful. As for the voice, in the old *Chang Yuan*, the sound is rich, with more mixed timbre, the voice position unity in the process. The head cavity, oral cavity, and chest cavity are three sonorous areas that can be converted flexibly. It sounds natural and flexible. But in the new version, *Chang Yuan* the voice is concentrated and bright, which sounds more resonating in oral cavity. Each word is clearer and more precise. The voice is round and loud. With respect to the music of the old *Chang Yuan*, the background music is used with folk instruments, and the performers sing. Music with rich color, have a strong music performance effect. In the new *Chang Yuan*, the music is much simpler, and music elements are only piano and singer. The singers pay more attention to music processing and singing skills.

There are a lot of famous vocal music works in Chinese national opera - *Chang Yuan* so that many vocal music learners and teachers choose to perform this opera. The opera stage atmosphere is relatively simple which often contains the piano and opera characters with deleting the previously complicated stage design. However, it is undeniable that the first appearance of *Zhang Yuan* is quite amazing and makes it be the eternal classics. *Chang Yuan* is a tragedy and the epic tragedy in the Chinese opera. The stage style demonstrates the bleakness, solemn, deep, vigorous, forceful, touching, magnificent and beautiful sense. For giving a kind of decorous feeling of history, it makes audiences feel the dense and historical value behind such heroic undertaking. These are the importance things in *Chang Yuan* opera that makes singers and audiences understand deeply in the history and learn how to preserve and develop for being with the young generation forward.

## Discussion

The history of opera *Chang Yuan* requires every vocal scholar to learn about it. Opera *Chang Yuan* needs both inheritance and innovation. On the basis of preserving the original history, it is necessary to optimize teaching and make reasonable innovation. At the same time, attention should be paid also to the following aspects:

### 1. Inheritance and innovation in *Chang Yuan opera*.

*Chang Yuan* is an important work in Chinese opera. Huang (2008) said that *Chang Yuan* is a representative work, the whole opera has an important historical significance, and the vocal works of opera are worth every vocal scholar to learn singing. Therefore, the inheritance of *Chang Yuan* is very important. Wang Hongchen (2014) mentioned that music is a kind of emotional art. Every normal person has a wealth of emotions. Opera writers must combine excellent folk music language with consciousness to express the inner feelings of opera characters. Only in this way, can it be moved by emotion, can it truly arouse the resonance of the audience's mind, and can it be accepted by the vast majority of the people. Liu Yong also mentioned in the article that the key to the revitalization and innovation of opera today is to have a good environment and good atmosphere. Scholars should face the challenges brought by the new culture bravely (Liu, 2017). With the rapid development of society, a lot of new opera also appear on the stage quickly. In the old version of opera *Chang Yuan*, the plots, characters and images of many plays are boring, lacking the characteristics and interestingness of the drama. Therefore, it is necessary to keep pace with The Times and add some factors of modern society to the opera to arouse people's attention to the social reality, arouse the audience's emotional reflection, and achieve the purpose of educating the society. It is necessary to inherit *Chang Yuan* opera and also arouse people's thinking.

### 2. Vocal singing skills in *Chang Yuan opera*.

By looking at *Chang Yuan*'s score written by Huang (2008) to understand the analysis of melody, rhythm and lyrics is a necessary condition for singing well in opera. In vocal singing skills in Opera *Chang Yuan*, different singers should be combined to develop their own singing style and skills. After interviewing different opera teachers Pan Hui and Wu Jing, I think every singer should fully understand and use breath. Because in the whole vocal singing, breathing is the most important part. Open throat steady vocal singing position is the core of singing, which most of the time the vocalist can't always maintain an open throat. Thus, the voice is not be stable. Articulating words correctly and clearly are also the key. Of course, in the vocal singing must have a degree of understanding of the opera. Not only know the opera lyrics, melody and rhythm but also to understand the implications of its vocal music. Only after understanding the vocal repertoire in the opera, can the singing be enriched, the opera level be improved, and the singer be more charming. In the study of opera singing, practice is always the most important. Of course, the teaching of teacher and practicing of student are an important part of teaching. Many

students listen carefully in class and practice hard after class, but it is still difficult to give full play to their actual performance on the stage. In my opinion, there should be two or three stages of practicing classes in each semester in the College of Musicology. The opera singing teacher can guide his students to rehearse together, correct mistakes, rehearse different versions of the opera and add some culture related to contemporary art on the basis of the original opera. In order to improve the level of singers, we have to carry forward the Chinese national opera culture.

### Suggestions

In the future, this paper will make further researches in the following aspects: 1) comparing the solo and chorus in the opera of *Chang Yuan*; 2) how to stand out the figure through the music works; 3) the influence of the vocal music to Chinese opera; 4) how to demonstrate the Chinese national features in the opera; 5) the meaning of the performance of vocal music in the opera; 6) how to classify the Chinese opera; 7) how to protect and retain the national opera with historical culture; 8) how to inherit Chinese national opera effectively.

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