

The Inheritance and Development of Italian Bel Canto in Modern Vocal Music Education

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Abstract: Among many singing arts, bel canto, as a symbol of the world's singing art level, has been highly praised and loved by people around the world over time in the long history of music. Bel canto originated in Italy, which can be said to have created Bel canto. Bel canto singing was developed by the earliest "eunuch singers" and has gradually become a musical form of Italian singing through continuous exploration and innovation by future generations. This paper focuses on the development process of Bel canto teaching materials in China, trying to absorb the essence of western vocal music to make its own development more multi-element. However, due to the lack of teaching technology and vocal music knowledge in China at present, the curriculum teaching has opposite effects. In the teaching process, teachers should have a correct understanding of the use of modern vocal music teaching in other countries, and can only have a reference mentality towards the vocal culture of other countries. They must not plagiarize or imitate the vocal culture of other countries. If we fully integrate the vocal culture of other countries into our vocal music teaching, it will lose the fundamental significance of modern vocal music education in China.

Keywords: Italian bel canto, modern vocal education, inheritance, development

1. Introduction

The term "Italian Bel Canto singing method and teaching method" is translated from Italian "Met-odie didattica di Belcanto Italiano", which is a new required course for postgraduate students majoring in opera and vocal music in Italy National Conservatory of Music in recent years. Bel Canto has a profound Italian cultural heritage, and its inheritance and development in China can not be separated from the support of Bel Canto vocal teaching materials. At the same time, the emergence, evolution and prosperity of Bel Canto teaching materials have also greatly promoted the development of Bel Canto singing and education in China [1]. For many years, even in Italy, the hometown of Bel Canto and western opera, the "Italian Bel Canto Singing Method and Teaching Method" is only a traditional skill taught by singers and vocal music teachers when they teach each other, but it is only in recent years that it is publicly taught as a formal course in the Conservatory of Music until vocal music students gradually understand and master the secret of "Italian Bel Canto Singing Method and Teaching Method" [2-3]. Bel canto can not only mix true and false sounds, but also stimulate the resonance cavity. Generally speaking, Bel canto has its own unique singing method and acoustic characteristics. Mastering the skills and singing methods of Bel canto is equivalent to training our voice into a voice instrument through singing [4]. This paper focuses on the development of bel canto textbooks in China, trying to absorb the essence of western vocal music and make its own development more multi-element. However, due to the lack of teaching technology and vocal music knowledge in China, the course teaching has the opposite effect [5]. When teaching students vocal music knowledge, most colleges usually only use imitation to let students imitate the vocal music they hear. Once there is no imitation in vocal music teaching, it will be difficult for students to find their own characteristics. Through this, we can see the historical changes of Bel Canto in China, which provides a basis for understanding the development history, present situation and prospect of Italian Bel Canto. At the same time, we also analyze the construction of Italian Bel Canto textbooks in China and put forward our own ideas and suggestions [6-7].

2. The Inheritance of Italian Bel canto in China

In the early stage of creation, bel canto singing was mainly characterized by its unique singing form. In the context of the historical environment at that time, vocal works aimed to arouse the patriotic

consciousness of the people. According to the materials in the film sound system, it can be felt that the bel canto singing method at that time was biased towards nature and did not have too much decoration. As bel canto singing method had just been introduced to China, it was still widely spread among the people at that time, and its singing form did not have much influence on the folk singing method. As shown in Figure 1, bel canto originated from Italy and has the meaning of "beautiful singing". Bel canto singing is a method of singing in which the throat is held in the inhaled position and the exhaled airflow blows on the vocal cords, allowing the open resonant cavity to resonate completely and evenly. To summarize in one sentence, bel canto singing is a mixed voice area singing method. Bel canto singing has always been known as "serious music, elegant art" and has received widespread attention from people.



Figure 1: Italian bel canto singing method

Bel canto singing not only pioneered the field of human vocal music, but also creatively developed high difficulty singing techniques, opening up a development path for the interpretation of opera as a comprehensive art. It also has a relatively complete ideological system and educational teaching methods in theoretical research. The reason why there have been numerous singers emerging in Italy for hundreds of years, in addition to the most basic natural conditions and innate factors of language, traditional singing methods and vocal teaching methods have played a decisive and crucial role. However, for many years, these things have been avoided by a very few singers and vocal authorities due to competition and monopoly, and have also covered it with a mysterious veil. Therefore, it is even more difficult to publicly impart. The construction of bel canto textbooks began with the beginning of professional education in bel canto. The earliest bel canto textbooks were some score textbooks that professional teachers needed to develop themselves in teaching. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the establishment of professional music colleges, music departments, and departments made bel canto education more scientific and systematic. The construction of bel canto textbooks also embarked on the path of development. After the reform and opening up. The increasing frequency of cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries has further promoted the development of professional education and textbook construction in bel canto. During this period, the construction of bel canto textbooks has shown a prosperous scene. During this period, the ideology of the Chinese people was influenced by the "Left" ideology, resulting in some differences in their understanding of bel canto singing, which had a significant impact on bel canto singing. In terms of stage practice in the field of vocal stage performance, the resounding voice, resounding resonance, rounded beauty, beautiful singing, high difficulty skills, and brilliant momentum were first presented in the form of bel canto on the international vocal stage, injecting new vitality and artistic charm into vocal stage art. Although there have been some twists and turns in the exploration of vocal art in bel canto, at this time, the national singing method has already integrated some bel canto singing methods. The most famous opera "Jiang Jie" is a successful work that integrates and draws inspiration from the national singing method and bel canto singing method. Bel canto singing in China has undergone tremendous changes over time and space, and is winding along the path of development. These are inseparable from the hardships and efforts of vocal educators, singers, and composers throughout history, as well as the strong support of the country for cultural and educational undertakings. I wish the construction of bel canto textbooks to a higher level, and I wish the development of bel canto singing education to become increasingly prosperous, cultivating more outstanding singers and educators.

3. Develop national vocal music

3.1 Establishing the Training Mode of Compound Vocal Music Talents with China Characteristics

Bel canto is not simply a small change, but should be changed according to the development of national vocal music. We should pay attention to the digestion and absorption of the essence of art, take its essence for our own use, and turn Bel canto into a vocal art suitable for China's vocal music. In the development of China, Bel Canto should not only pursue the characteristics of traditional Bel Canto singing, but also integrate Chinese pronunciation. When it comes to the diversification of Bel Canto music, Sarah Brightman, the goddess of the moon, is inevitable. As shown in Figure 2, her voice is fresh and bright, and she is known as "the voice of nature". Pop music, classical music and musical were originally incompatible or even antagonistic music forms, but Sarah's singing combined them creatively. Many fans also realized classical music because of Sarah, so she was also called "cross-border soprano".



Figure 2: "Moonlight Goddess" Sarah Brightman

It's important to recognize that many people perceive the abundance of talented singers in Italy as a natural phenomenon, almost taking it for granted. There's a widespread belief that the Italian approach to singing is innate, as if every Italian is born with an inherent ability to sing, rendering formal singing methods or pedagogy unnecessary. However, in the realm of vocal instruction, it is essential to strike a balance by incorporating certain modern vocal teaching techniques from other countries. This approach enables students not only to grasp the fundamentals of Chinese vocal music but also to gain exposure to the rich vocal traditions of other nations, enriching their understanding of the broader spectrum of vocal music. Throughout the teaching process, educators should adopt a nuanced perspective on the application of contemporary vocal pedagogy from other countries. They should approach it as a valuable reference rather than blindly replicating or borrowing elements from other vocal cultures. Overreliance on foreign vocal traditions could potentially dilute the unique essence and purpose of modern vocal music education in China. Therefore, it is crucial to find a harmonious balance, allowing students to benefit from a global perspective while retaining the core principles and essence of Chinese vocal music education.

3.2 Promoting the Development of Chinese Characteristic Ethnic Vocal Music

The concept of "Bel Canto with Chinese characteristics" embodies the fusion of our nation's distinctive artistic essence with lessons drawn from traditional Bel Canto. In essence, this novel approach to Bel Canto seeks to harmoniously integrate the rich cultural heritage of China with the proven attributes of the traditional Bel Canto style. This synergy offers a unique and vibrant perspective that reflects the depth of our artistic tradition while embracing a global musical heritage. In tandem with the evolution of Bel Canto with Chinese characteristics, there arises a pressing need to enhance the teaching capabilities in vocal music departments at colleges and universities. This is a challenge that must be addressed with a sense of urgency. Advancements in vocal music education demand a cadre of skilled and knowledgeable instructors who can guide students in the exploration of this nuanced art form. It necessitates an in-depth understanding of both traditional Bel Canto principles and the specific nuances of Chinese vocal music. From a scientific standpoint, it is essential to recognize that regardless of the vocal music tradition being explored, the fundamental principles of breath control, vocal stability, and

proper voice placement remain constant. These elements serve as the cornerstones of all vocal techniques, underpinning the art of singing irrespective of its cultural or stylistic origin. Therefore, the study and application of these universal principles not only elevate the quality of vocal instruction but also facilitate a seamless integration of traditional Bel Canto and Chinese vocal music, contributing to the continued evolution of "Bel Canto with Chinese characteristics." No matter which singing method is the same, the basic requirements are the same. We should have a certain understanding of the local Italian Bel Canto, and make a corresponding summary of the local Italian Bel Canto. We should apply the Italian Bel Canto to modern vocal music teaching and effectively combine the two. However, due to the constraints of the current teaching system in China, the teaching of Italian Bel Canto is not perfect. In order to solve this problem, major universities need to hire inheritors with Italian Bel Canto professional quality to compile course textbooks and write high-quality teaching contents into the textbooks. Bel canto is not only the most basic or the only singing method in opera singing in the world vocal stage art performance, but also widely used in vocal genres such as drama, opera, art songs and religious songs, and it has played an absolute dominant role in a long period of time, affecting the development of various vocal singing fields and achieving great success.

3.3 Strengthen the singing of China's works

China has achieved remarkable milestones in the realm of vocal music that have reverberated on the global stage. Yet, it's vital for artists to bear in mind that all forms of art exist to serve the people. If our singers do not actively engage with and contribute to the development of our national music culture, the rich tapestry of our artistic heritage may slowly fade into obscurity. It is within this context that the study and practice of Italian Bel Canto take on paramount importance. Regrettably, many of our students may not possess a deep understanding of Italian Bel Canto, which stands as one of the foundational pillars of vocal music. As a result, it becomes the duty of vocal music educators to systematically introduce students to the basic tenets of Italian Bel Canto. This introduction serves as the initial step in building a strong foundation for students. By providing students with the essential knowledge of Italian Bel Canto, we enable them to develop an initial comprehension of its principles and significance. Subsequently, as vocal instructors, we can impart vocal techniques within the framework of Italian Bel Canto. This approach ensures that students not only acquire practical singing skills but also connect their artistic journey to the rich heritage of this musical tradition. In doing so, we facilitate a more holistic understanding of vocal music, which incorporates both the intricacies of Italian Bel Canto and the distinct qualities of Chinese vocal music, ultimately strengthening the cultural fabric of our nation's artistic heritage. Compared with the dull and single teaching mode in school, it is a better method for people to carry out the inheritance of Italian Bel Canto spontaneously in their lives. This inheritance method can protect Italian Bel Canto to a certain extent and promote Italian Bel Canto culture. From an objective point of view, Italian Bel Canto is not only the embodiment of the actual situation of the nation, but also the representative of national and cultural characteristics. From this, we can know that the inheritance of Italian Bel Canto has a certain role in promoting the development of the nation and even the country. It is inseparable from the unremitting efforts of many singing predecessors and vocal educators in China. Their contributions to Bel Canto deserve our respect, and they also lead us to explore in the future vocal education, inherit and carry forward the Italian art of Bel Canto, and creatively create an unprecedented new singing method of Bel Canto.

4. Conclusions

The vocal art education of bel canto in Italy in the 18th century has made great contributions to the development of vocal art education worldwide. It not only flourished cultural and artistic activities around the world, but also played a positive guiding role in cultivating a group of excellent vocal performing artists and singers. In the inheritance and reference of vocal music, the combination of China and West has achieved good results in both bel canto and folk songs. In order to form a diverse vocal style with multiple styles coexisting, it is necessary to pay attention to the integration of bel canto and other vocal art forms, break the traditional one-sided situation, and be more conducive to the scientific development of vocal art. It has played a bridging role in promoting the prosperity of the opera market, higher education, and professional culture of art groups around the world, as well as strengthening cultural exchanges between countries. Italian music and singing schools are satisfied with their existing achievements, but in the Germanic countries, interest in style is not limited to the reasons in music, but also allows music schools to maintain a high-level culture that nurtures knowledge and change. To effectively integrate the inheritance of Italian bel canto in modern vocal teaching, it is necessary for vocal instructors to enhance their own requirements and pay attention to the improvement of their vocal skills

in daily teaching. Only when teachers have a high level of professional ability and help students master the essence of Italian bel canto, can Italian bel canto be better inherited.

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