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## The Structure of Education in European *Bel Canto* Vocal Art in Contemporary China

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### Abstract

The beginnings of teaching Western *bel canto* vocal style in China date back to the 1930s. Over the course of nearly a century, *bel canto* has become deeply entrenched in the musical culture of the country. *Bel canto* singing is not the dominant trend in Chinese vocal education, however, as the Chinese take painstaking care to cultivate traditional singing forms, which are marked by the extraordinary diversity and character of the country's numerous ethnic groups. In spite of the challenges involved in adopting and understanding Western musical styles, *bel canto* instruction has seen dynamic development in China, indicating a fascination with both its techniques and aesthetics. An ever-increasing number of highly trained Chinese singers appear on the stages all over the world. It is common for these artists to refine their skills by studying in Europe and the United States, and the most outstanding of them often return to China in order to pass their knowledge and experience on to next generations.

The present article attempts to provide a synthetic description of the structure of vocal education in China, which is widely associated with a "Western" singing technique and the operatic rep-

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ertoire collectively referred to as *bel canto*. The article outlines the characteristics of education at selected Chinese institutions with regard to aspects such as the methods and curriculum of teaching *bel canto* singing, the number of instructional hours, the main teaching objectives and the principles for verifying students' results. In addition, it contains information on the sheet music collections and textbooks used in vocal training, as well as notable singing instructors.

**Keywords:** vocal training, vocal studies, Chinese universities, *bel canto*, curricula

## Introduction

In 1927, the National Conservatory of Music (now the Shanghai Conservatory of Music) was established in China, thereby introducing *bel canto* singing style to the Chinese education system<sup>1</sup>. Since that year, the teaching of classical *bel canto* singing has seen continuous development at Chinese higher education institutions, and its effects have brought lasting changes to the musical culture of the country. It should be noted that for many years, vocal education in China was focused on teaching Chinese music, which is characterised by great diversity and richness resulting from the country's centuries-old cultural tradition. Today, the curricula of Chinese music universities always feature a distinct separation into traditional singing and *bel canto*. In China, special attention is paid to preserving tradition, and thus traditional singing is taught at a vast majority of higher education institutions. However, global trends, especially the globalisation of culture, have clearly demonstrated that contemporary cultural identity of China requires an increasing assimilation of Western cultural models and achievements. This process applies to all areas of culture, including the field of vocal studies.

### 1. The Structure of Education in European *Bel Canto* Vocal Style in China

In China, *bel canto* is taught at three types of institutions:

1. Music conservatories (the equivalent of Polish music academies) and middle schools affiliated to music conservatories<sup>2</sup>;
2. Comprehensive universities and normal universities;
3. Universities of Arts.

<sup>1</sup> 李炜, *美声唱法在当代中国发展概论*, 中国纺织出版社, 北京 2019; [Lǐ Wěi, *Měishēng chàngfǎ zài dāngdài Zhōngguó fāzhǎn gàilùn*, Zhōngguó Fǎngzhī Chūbǎnshè, Běijīng 2019].

<sup>2</sup> 余丹红, *音乐教育年鉴*, 上海音乐学院出版社, 上海 2017; [Yú Dānhóng, *Yīnyuè jiàoyù niánjiàn*, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn Chūbǎnshè, Shànghǎi 2017].

### 1.1. Music Conservatories

There are 11 music conservatories in China, as shown in Table 1. The Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing (CCOM), the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing (CCM) and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (SHCM) are featured on the prestigious Double First-Class list of colleges as the top three music institutions in the country<sup>3</sup>. The Double First-Class status is a form of distinction awarded to higher education institutions by the Ministry of Education in recognition of their high teaching and operation standards.

Table 1. List of music conservatories in China.

Year of establishment	Location	Name of conservatory
1927	Shanghai	Shanghai Conservatory of Music
1949	Beijing	Central Conservatory of Music
1964	Beijing	China Conservatory of Music
1938	Shenyang	Shenyang Conservatory of Music
1949	Xi' an	Xi' an Conservatory of Music
1939	Chengdu	Sichuan Conservatory of Music
1953	Wuhan	Wuhan Conservatory of Music
1957	Guangzhou	Xinghai Conservatory of Music
1958	Tianjin	Tianjin Conservatory of Music
2016	Harbin	Harbin Conservatory of Music
2016	Hangzhou	Zhejiang Conservatory of Music

Source: own work.

Conservatories in China offer four- or five-year undergraduate courses in *bel canto* singing (bachelor's studies). The Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music offer a five-year bachelor's programme at the Voice and Opera Department<sup>4</sup>. At the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing, *bel canto* is taught in the Vocal Arts and Opera Department (also referred to as The Chinese Academy of Vocal Music Arts)<sup>5</sup>. The bachelor's programme here also lasts five years. The Zhejiang Conservatory of Music in Hangzhou and the Harbin Conservatory of Music offer five-year bachelor's courses as well. The remaining 6 conservatories run a four-year bachelor's course with a specialisa-

<sup>3</sup> 中国高等教育, 双一流名单公布, 中国学术期刊电子出版社, 北京 2017, p. 44; [Zhōngguó gāoděng jiàoyù, Shuāng yīliú míngdān gōngbù, Zhōngguó Xuéshù Qīkān Diànzǐ Chūbǎnshè, Běijīng 2017, p. 44].

<sup>4</sup> Source: [https://en.ccom.edu.cn/About\\_Us/Organization/Departments/Voice\\_and\\_Opera/Introduction.htm](https://en.ccom.edu.cn/About_Us/Organization/Departments/Voice_and_Opera/Introduction.htm), [access: 15.07.2024].

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://en.ccmusic.edu.cn/ABOUTUS/INTRODUCTION/index.htm>, [access: 15.07.2024].

tion in *bel canto*<sup>6</sup>. At all conservatories, the master's programme in *bel canto* singing lasts three years.

#### MIDDLE SCHOOLS AFFILIATED TO MUSIC CONSERVATORIES

When discussing the specifics of the highest level of singing instruction in the Chinese education system, it is important to mention a type of middle schools which serves as a kind of “talent forge”, namely middle schools affiliated to music conservatories. These schools operate under a university-based model of educating exceptionally gifted students. This type of schools was proposed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Huang Zi, a renowned Chinese composer and music teacher. Previously, middle schools in China only conducted music classes in groups and did not offer individual singing lessons. Huang Zi called for the inclusion of an individual *bel canto* singing course in the curriculum that would be taught by a qualified instructor<sup>7</sup>. Established in 1951, the Secondary Professional Music School Affiliated to Shanghai Conservatory of Music, founded by the famous Chinese musician He Luting (1903–1999)<sup>8</sup>, was the first music middle school in China and a practical realisation of Huang Zi's idea of a school for talented students. The minimum age for students to be admitted to the *bel canto* course at an affiliated middle school is 17, and the programme lasts three years. Taking the Shanghai Middle School as an example, the graduates of affiliated music schools wishing to apply for admission to Shanghai Conservatory must pass the appropriate vocational examination<sup>9</sup>. Table 2 provides a list of middle schools affiliated to music conservatories in China.

Table 2. List of Chinese middle schools affiliated to music conservatories.

Year of Establishment	Location	Name of School
1951	Shanghai	The Music Middle School Affiliated to Shanghai Conservatory of Music
1949	Beijing	Central Conservatory of Music Middle School
1964	Beijing	Middle School Attached to the China Conservatory of Music

<sup>6</sup> 中国高等教育学生信息网, 中国 2024; [Zhōngguó gāoděng jiàoyù xuéshēng xīnxi wǎng, Zhōngguó 2024].

<sup>7</sup> 黄自, 中学规程, 孙继南编“中国近代音乐教育史纪年”, 上海音乐学院出版社, 上海 2012; [Huáng Zì, Zhōngxué guīchéng, Sūn Jìnán biān “Zhōngguó jìndài yīnyuè jiàoyù shǐjì nián”, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn Chūbǎnshè, Shànghǎi 2012].

<sup>8</sup> 丁善德, 上海音乐学院简史, 上海音乐学院出版, 上海 1987; [Dīng Shàndé, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn jiǎnshǐ, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn Chūbǎn, Shànghǎi 1987].

<sup>9</sup> 上海音乐学院附属中等音乐学校 2024 年学校招生文件, 上海 2024; [Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn Fùshǔ Zhōngděng Yīnyuè Xuéxiào 2024 nián xuéxiào zhāoshēng wénjiàn, Shànghǎi 2024].

Table 2. List of Chinese middle schools affiliated to music conservatories (cont.).

Year of Establishment	Location	Name of School
1953	Shenyang	Secondary Music School Affiliated to the Shenyang Conservatory of Music
1953	Xi' an	Affiliated Secondary School of Xi'an Conservatory of Music
1954	Chengdu	Affiliated Middle School of Sichuan Conservatory of Music
1954	Wuhan	Affiliated Middle School of Wuhan Conservatory of Music
1957	Guangzhou	Affiliated Middle School of Xinghai Conservatory of Music
1958	Tianjin	Affiliated Middle School of Tianjin Conservatory of Music
2017	Hangzhou	Music Middle School Affiliated to the Zhejiang Conservatory of Music

Source: own work.

## 1.2. Comprehensive Universities and Normal Universities

In the Chinese higher education system, universities with the adjective “normal” are institutions specialising in pedagogy and educational sciences. On the other hand, universities without this word in their name are public state institutions offering comprehensive education (also called general universities). The present-day realities have led to a standardisation of curricula and the scope of research conducted at these institutions, yet the traditional, established names have not been changed. It should also be noted that within the structure of higher education institutions in China, which are generally referred to as “universities”, the faculties providing music education are called Colleges of Music (which in Polish refers to a music school), and they are further divided into departments (which can be considered equivalent to faculties at Polish universities)<sup>10</sup>.

The extensive structure of a College of Music within a single university is comparable in size to an independent educational institution such as an academy of music. For this reason, this university division is also commonly referred to as a “School of Music”.

Music courses offered by comprehensive universities are musicology and music performance. Both programmes encompass the study of singing, although students are free to choose between traditional Chinese singing and European *bel canto*. In China, there are 421 universities offering a course in musicology and 298 universities offering one in music performance<sup>11</sup>. Bachelor’s studies at

<sup>10</sup> The structure of Chinese universities does not include the “chair” (Polish: katedra) division as it functions in Polish universities.

<sup>11</sup> 中国高等教育学生信息网 2024; [Zhōngguó gāoděng jiàoyù xuéshēng xìnxī wǎng 2024]; source: <https://gaokao.chsi.com.cn/zyk/zyb/ksyxPage?specId=73383627> [access: 15.07.2024].

this type of universities last four years, whereas master's studies take three years to complete.

Comprehensive universities with music departments also exist in Poland (10 universities with departments of this kind, under various names)<sup>12</sup>. Chinese comprehensive universities and normal universities generally offer a *bel canto* singing programme that is comparable to Polish universities whose music courses include the subject known as voice emission. A more detailed programme in this regard is discussed in section 2.2.

### 1.3. Universities of the Arts Offering *Bel Canto* Singing Courses

There are six major art universities in China, also known as the six Provincial Comprehensive Art Schools. These institutions represent individual provinces and offer the highest level of education. They include:

- Jilin University of the Arts (Changchun),
- Nanjing University of the Arts (Nanjing),
- Guangxi University of the Arts (Nanning),
- Yunnan University of the Arts (Kunming),
- Shandong University of the Arts (Jinan),
- Xinjiang University of the Arts (Urumqi).

Among the youngest art universities in China are Anhui Academy of Arts (2019) and Inner Mongolia Arts University (1957/2015), as well as private institutions such as Dalian Art College and Sichuan Institute of Culture and Arts. Table 3 provides a list of eight art universities offering courses in *bel canto*.

Table 3. List of art universities in China.

Year of Establishment	Location	Name of University
1946	Changchun	Jilin University of Arts
1912	Nanjing	Nanjing University of Arts
1938	Nanning	Guangxi Arts University
1959	Kunming	Yunnan Arts University
1958	Jinan	Shandong University of Arts
1958	Urumqi	Xinjiang Arts University
2019	Hefei	Anhui University of Arts
1957	Huhhot	Inner Mongolia Arts University

Source: own work.

<sup>12</sup> Dymon M., Zi Ye, *Edukacja muzyczna na etapie wyższego szkolnictwa w Polsce i Chinach – propozycja badań komparatystycznych*, "Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka" 2019, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 74–79, DOI: [https://doi.org/10.15584/eti.2019.3.10].

## 2. Description of the *Bel Canto* Education System – Selected Examples

It is a challenging task to provide a detailed description of the *bel canto* education system in China since we are dealing with structures that are still at a developmental stage, even though they appear to have great ambitions. In addition, numerous private art schools teaching *bel canto* are being established. However, the quality of education at these institutions is difficult to assess reliably, and their curricula are highly varied; therefore, only state-run higher education institutions are the focus of this description.

### 2.1. 上海音乐学院, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, SHCM

#### OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE *BEL CANTO* COURSE

*Bel canto* training is aimed at achieving optimal professional competence, i.e. the knowledge of vocal music both in terms of repertoire and vocal technique, as well as the development of artistic qualities in performance and ensuring students' comprehensive growth, leading to their artistic independence. As part of the course, the student is required to complete a programme which includes general musical knowledge, a wide range of vocal repertoires and the ability to perform works in various languages and musical styles. The high standard that students are expected to represent is meant to develop and cultivate European *bel canto* singing in China.

#### GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE *BEL CANTO* COURSE

*Bel canto* specialisation courses at bachelor's level take five years to complete and comprise a variety of subjects. From the perspective of vocational training, the most important components are the core professional courses – theoretical (the history of Chinese and European music, traditional Chinese music, theory of music, harmony, polyphony and language courses) and, primarily, practical courses. Among the latter, the greatest amount of time is devoted to individual singing lessons, working with a piano instructor, group classes focused on preparing opera performances and choral activities. Individual *bel canto* lessons amount to 360 hours in total over the course of five years. Singing instruction is individual and takes place two times a week with a voice teacher and a piano accompanist. Compulsory subjects include 160 hours of one-on-one lessons with a piano instructor over the course of the five-year programme (once per week on average).

The three-year master's programme encompasses the following subjects: solo singing, music aesthetics, musical analysis, opera duets, opera performances,

artistic interpretation of vocal works, studies of Italian opera librettos, interpretation of art songs and poetry, contemporary vocal music and vocal practice<sup>13</sup>.

#### VOICE AND OPERA DEPARTMENT – CURRICULUM FOR SOLO *BEL CANTO* SINGING

The detailed presentation of the *bel canto* singing programme at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music is based on interviews with female students admitted in 2023<sup>14</sup>. The bachelor's programme structure for each year of study is as follows:

The first and second year of study are focused on the fundamentals of vocal technique and developing proper singing habits. The next stage involves combining these elements with the practice of singing musical pieces. Vocal exercises are based on the five vowels used in *bel canto* singing: *a, e, i, o, u*. At this stage, the instruction concentrates on vocal range training. The repertoire consists of simple pieces; the recommended works include Baroque operatic arias such as G.F. Haendel's *Ombra mai fu* (*Serse*), *Laschia, ch'io pianga* (*Rinaldo*), *Verdi prati* (*Alcina*), W.A. Mozart's arias and V. Bellini's ariettas.

The third year of bachelor's studies is meant to further develop the voice and vocal awareness of the student. The programme usually includes pieces of medium technical difficulty. More attention is paid to building the ability to express emotions through singing and achieving proper Italian pronunciation.

Students of the fourth and fifth year make an independent choice between two courses: art song and opera. In the former case, they are required to master a considerable number of songs, including Chinese, German and French works. The European *bel canto* technique also applies to Chinese songs. The course is concluded with a chamber recital with piano accompaniment.

Students opting for the opera specialisation are primarily trained in performing operatic arias. The curriculum includes the *bel canto* vocal technique, Western musical style and the study of performance traditions. Preparation for performing operas on stage is a significant part of the course. The studies culminate in a student-led opera production. Learning foreign languages is also essential to exploring the *bel canto* vocal repertoire. From the first year to the first half of the fourth year, therefore, the conservatory offers language courses in Italian, German, French and Russian.

**During their master's studies**, students receive two solo singing lessons each week. The master's programme puts emphasis on practical artistic experiences, requiring the students to become involved in a variety of activities such as music festivals, art festivals, concerts, opera productions, teaching practice and using musical techniques.

<sup>13</sup> 上海音乐学院本科教学手册, 2015 版本科生培养计划, 上海音乐学院官方网站, 2024; [Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn běnkē jiàoxué shǒucè, 2015 bǎn běnkēshēng péiyǎng jìhuà, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn guānfāng wǎngzhàn, 2024].

<sup>14</sup> 张子靖, 李泽正, 上海音乐学院声乐歌剧, 网络访谈, 2024; [Zhāng Zìjìng, Lǐ Zézèng, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn shēngyuè gējù, wǎngluò fǎngtán, 2024].



## ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Shanghai Conservatory of Music organises monthly *bel canto* concerts. All students are obliged to participate in two school concerts each academic year. First- and second-year students are also required to take mid- and end-year examinations, performing one Chinese and one foreign piece. Third-year students must perform two foreign pieces, including at least one German song and one Chinese work in the middle and at the end of the academic year. The students of the fourth and fifth year are obliged to participate in rehearsals and opera performances organised by the conservatory. Furthermore, it is mandatory to perform a solo recital and submit a written thesis at the end of their studies. The programme of the graduation concert ought to include Chinese vocal works, European pieces from different periods, art songs and operatic arias.

## SHEET MUSIC MATERIALS USED IN THE TEACHING PROCESS

The teaching materials most commonly used at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music are the following collections of vocal works:

尚家骧，意大利歌曲集 108 首，人民音乐出版社，北京 2009; [Shàng Jiāxiāng, Yìdàlì gēqǔ jí 108 shǒu, Rénmín Yīnyuè Chūbǎnshè, Běijīng 2009]; (Shang Jia xiang, *108 Italian Songs*, People's Music Publishing House, Beijing 2009).

李维渤编译，72 首意大利古典歌曲歌词翻译，中央音乐学院出版社，北京 2007; [Lǐ Wéibó biānyì, 72 shǒu Yìdàlì gǔdiǎn gēqǔ zìcí fānyì, Zhōngyāng Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn Chūbǎnshè, Běijīng 2007]; (Li Weibo, *72 Italian Classical Songs with Word Translation*, Central Conservatory of Music Publishing House, Beijing 2007).

周枫，朱小强，外国歌剧选曲集女高音咏叹调上下册全套，上海音乐出版社上海 2017; [Zhōu Fēng, Zhū Xiǎoqiáng, wàiguó gējù xuǎnqǔ jǐnǚ gāoyīn yǒngtàndiào shàngxià cè quántào, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Chūbǎnshè Shànghǎi 2017]; (Zhou Feng, Zhu Xiaoqiang, *Foreign Opera Selection, Complete Set of Soprano Aria*, Shanghai Music Press, Shanghai 2017).

郭茜编著，黄自独唱艺术歌曲集，安徽文艺出版社，安徽 2010; [Guō Qiàn biānzhe, Huáng Zì dúchàng yìshù gēqǔ jí, Ānhuī Wényì Chūbǎnshè, Ānhuī 2010]; (Guo Qian, *Huang Zi's Art Song Collection*, Anhui Literature and Art Publishing House, Anhui 2010).

俞宜萱，罗西尼多尼采蒂贝利尼艺术歌曲选集，人民音乐出版社，北京 2007; [Yú Yíxuān, Luōxīní Duōnicǎidì Bèilíní yìshù gēqǔ xuǎnjí, Rénmín Yīnyuè Chūbǎnshè, Běijīng 2007]; (Yu Yixuan, *Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini Art Song Collection*, People's Music Publishing House, Beijing 2007).

廖昌永，中国艺术歌曲百年曲集，上海音乐学院出版社，上海 2020; [Liào Chāngyǒng, Zhōngguó yìshù gēqǔ bǎinián qūjí, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Xuéyuàn

Chūbǎnshè, Shànghǎi 2020]; (Liao Changyong, *A Century of Chinese Art Songs*, Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, Shanghai 2020).

#### FACULTY MEMBERS OF THE VOICE AND OPERA DEPARTMENT

At present, the Shanghai Conservatory of Music employs 18 *bel canto* instructors, 2 acting instructors and 1 instructor each for stage movement and diction (pronunciation). Among the 18 *bel canto* teachers are prominent figures, including two singers of international renown – the current president of the SHCM, Liao Changyong, and the soprano Huan Ying.

**Liao Changyong**, a baritone who won first prizes at three prestigious competitions in the years 1996–1997: the Toulouse International Vocal Competition in France, the Plácido Domingo Operalia World Competition and the Queen Sonja International Music Competition in Norway. As the first Chinese singer to perform on the stage of the famous Washington National Opera, Liao Changyong achieved success in the role of Count di Luna in Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, performing together with Plácido Domingo during the 2000/2001 season, and then in 2001, he appeared in Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman*. He has shared the stage with artists such as Plácido Domingo (Tokyo, 1998) and Jose Carreras (inauguration of the Grand Theatre in Shanghai, 1998). He also gave two performances at Carnegie Hall in New York – in 1999 and 2002. In recent years, he has devoted himself to performing in Chinese operas and promoting Chinese art songs. As a teacher, he has nurtured the talents of numerous outstanding musicians and contributed to the internationalisation of the conservatory and advancement of academic research carried out at the institution.

**Huan Ying**, a coloratura soprano born in Shanghai. In 1992, she took the second place at the 1992 Paris International Vocal Competition. In 1995, she was chosen for the role of the eponymous heroine in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, directed by the French filmmaker Frédéric Mitterrand, earning her overnight renown. In the years 1998–1999, she sang Du Liniang's part in the world tour of Tang Xianzu's *Peony Pavilion*. In 2005, the Royal Danish Opera invited Huan Ying to perform in Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* for the first time.

## 2.2. 南京师范大学, Nanjing Normal University, NNU

Nanjing Normal University is located in the ancient capital of six dynasties in Chinese history. The origins of the institution date back to 1902. Musical arts are taught at the Department of Music, which is officially known as Nanjing Normal University School of Music. It is situated in the Suiyuan campus, which is renowned as “the most beautiful campus of the Orient”.

## BEL CANTO COURSE TEACHING OBJECTIVES

Vocal instruction at Nanjing Normal University is mainly aimed at acquiring practical skills related to proper voice production and singing teaching methods, as well as ensuring competence in the analysis of vocal music works. The curriculum is designed to provide comprehensive education to future singing teachers, who will potentially work in secondary schools and other institutions.

## COURSE STRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM

The detailed description of the *bel canto* teaching programme at Nanjing Normal University is based on the *Vocal Music Curriculum* of the university's department of music<sup>15</sup>. It is derived from American experiences in vocal education at pedagogical institutions, and it can be said that the university follows a Chinese-American academic model.

**At bachelor's level**, vocal instruction lasts two or three years, depending on the specialisation. *Bel canto* is taught in the form of individual and group classes. The individual lessons are reserved for students who have chosen the *bel canto* singing specialisation. However, students can also choose a general specialisation, in which case they only participate in group classes. At the Department of Music of Nanjing Normal University in China, each student learns vocal music, piano and a Chinese instrument. This means that students must select one primary field of study and two additional subjects. If the student opts for the *bel canto* specialisation, they will study singing individually, while the basics of piano and a Chinese instrument are taught in groups. The group *bel canto* course takes two years to complete and is only offered in the first and second years of studies; each group consists of three to five students. In the case of individual courses, students receive individual singing lessons for three years. The curriculum covers the fundamentals of vocal technique, and the technical exercises are chosen at the teacher's discretion. Over the three years of instruction, the student learns and performs approximately ten to twenty pieces, including Chinese *bel canto* works, European operatic arias and art songs.

**The three-year master's programme** is divided into six academic modules: general courses, basic theoretical courses, vocal performances, vocational lectures, elective courses and work experience. The vocal module encompasses three main courses: solo singing, the study of vocal art and performing practice. The solo singing course consists of two individual sessions per week, each lasting 45 minutes, without the presence of a piano instructor. The contents of the course focus on performing *bel canto* works representing different styles and periods.

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<sup>15</sup> 音乐学 2023 版, 人才培养方案, 南京师范大学教务处, 2024; [Yīnyuèxué 2023 bǎn, réncái péiyǎng fāng'àn, Nánjīng Shīfàn Dàxué jiàowùchù, 2024].

## ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND TEACHING MATERIALS

The learning outcomes of the *bel canto* course are assessed through examinations held at the end of each semester. Students sing 1–2 Chinese or European songs per semester. Over the course of their studies, they are required to sing two solo recitals – during the third and fifth semester – each lasting no less than 45 minutes. It is also mandatory to present and defend a written thesis.

The sheet music materials used in teaching include the following publications:

满玉华，中国声乐作品选，春风文艺出版社，辽宁 1993；[Mǎn Yùhuá, Zhōngguó shēngyuè zuòpǐn xuǎn, Chūnfēng Wényì Chūbǎnshè, Liáoníng 1993]; (Man Yuhua, *Selected Chinese Vocal Works*, Chunfen Literature and Art Publishing House, Liaoning 1993).

莫继刚编，中国艺术歌曲演唱指南，上海音乐出版社，上海 2003；[Mò Jìgāng biān, Zhōngguó yìshù gēqū yǎnchàng zhǐnán, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Chūbǎnshè, Shànghǎi 2003]; (Mo Jigang, *Guide to the Performance of Chinese Art Songs*, Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai 2003).

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## SINGING TEACHERS AT NANJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Eight singing teachers are employed at Nanjing Normal University, including five *bel canto* instructors: Lu Qi, Yan Mintao, Wang Bing, Chen Jie and Shen Jie. Among them, the soprano Lu Qi and the baritone Chen Jie have achieved individual success.

**Lu Qi**, a soprano, is currently the head of the Department of Music and Drama at Nanjing Normal University School of Music. She performs as a soloist at the Shanghai Opera and in Beijing. She has participated in numerous festivals and premieres of works by contemporary composers, for instance at the Beijing International Festival (2002, 2005, 2010) and the Bamberg International Festival

(2008). She has also won several prestigious prizes at vocal competitions in China and Japan.

**Chen Jie**, a baritone and the winner of the Silver Medal at the Obela Linada International Singing Competition in Italy. He has been invited to perform solo concerts in Italy, the United States, Singapore, Malaysia and other countries. His students have won numerous awards at singing competitions. Chen Jie published a textbook for teaching singing and many articles on vocal arts.

### 2.3. 山东艺术学院, Shandong University of Arts

Founded in 1958 and located in the historic city of Jinan, Shandong University of Arts is the only higher education institute of its kind in Shandong province. *Bel canto* singing is taught at the Vocal Department of the university's School of Music.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE *BEL CANTO* COURSE

The goal of education at the Vocal Department is to ensure comprehensive development of musical talent, enabling students to pursue a career in vocal performance, voice teaching and academic research<sup>16</sup>.

#### CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

The *bel canto* course at Shandong University of Arts spans 4 years of bachelor's studies and 3 years of master's studies. The singing curriculum is comprised of five main modules carried out during the first phase (bachelor's studies) over four years.

**The general education module** includes courses in ideology, physical education, foreign languages and introduction to computer culture, as well as courses offered by the Department of Public Courses Teaching. **The general music subjects module** consists of the following subjects: introduction to Chinese folk music, theory of music, sight-reading and ear training, harmony, analysis of musical works, rhythmic and piano playing. **The core vocational subjects module** (elective) features courses such as the basics of vocal training, opera performance, vocal ensembles and choir. **The advanced vocational subjects module** (elective) comprises the following subjects: chamber music, musical masterpieces, contemporary Chinese music and introduction to world folk music (the basics of ethnomusicology). The final module, **professional practice**, is composed of activities such as preparation for graduation exams and recitals, drafting theses, work experience (performances, participation in concerts), military training and social practice<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> 山东艺术学院本科专业人才培养状况报告 2022–2023 学年; [Shāndōng Yìshù Xuéyuàn běnkē zhuānyè réncái péiyǎng zhuàngkuàng bàogào 2022–2023 xuénián].

<sup>17</sup> 山东艺术学院本科专业人才培养状况报告 2022–2023; [Shāndōng Yìshù Xuéyuàn běnkē zhuānyè réncái péiyǎng zhuàngkuàng bàogào 2022–2023].

DETAILED CURRICULUM OF CORE VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS AT SHANDONG UNIVERSITY OF ARTS

The following subsection contains an in-depth discussion of courses directly related to the teaching of *bel canto* singing and fall within the scope of the core vocational subjects module: solo singing, opera performance and opera ensembles. The information on the contents of the course was obtained through online interviews with the university's current students Quinghua Li and Chenyang Zhao, a recent graduate of the vocal programme at Shandong<sup>18</sup>.

Solo singing instruction is conducted in the form of individual classes with a singing teacher. The **bachelor's studies** last four years; first- and second-year students receive one 45-minute lesson per week, whereas third- and fourth-year students have two 45-minute lessons per week. While the school offers singing lessons with an accompanist, there is no fixed schedule for this type of classes – lessons with a pianist are organised depending on the needs. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. The four-year period of studies can be summarised as follows:

- **Year one:** the curriculum focuses on the fundamentals of vocal technique. Singing exercises begin with a simple practice of melodic scales. The repertoire consists of basic pieces in Chinese or Italian<sup>19</sup>.
- **Year two:** learning is based on vocal techniques taught during the first year of study, with more demanding exercises being introduced.
- **Year three:** the continuation of vocal training with regard to vocal register balance, voice stability, stage performance techniques and varied expression. The repertoire is expanded with more challenging arias from foreign and Chinese operas and German art songs.
- **Year four:** emphasis is placed on consolidating all vocal skills and studying *bel canto* works by different composers and from different periods.

At Shandong University of Arts, there are no standardised requirements as to the period of origin or the language of the pieces studied each semester. The choice of repertoire is at the discretion of singing teachers. There are also no requirements concerning the foreign-language repertoire in vocal examinations over the course of the four years of studies. Students are required to prepare two pieces for each mid-semester and final examination, with a panel of examiners choosing one piece to be performed by the student.

<sup>18</sup> 网络访谈, 山东艺术学院 2022 级在校声乐系, 美声演唱方向, 李青华, 山东艺术学院 2019 级声乐系, 美声演唱方向, 赵辰阳; [Wǎngluò fǎngtán, Shāndōng Yìshù Xuéyuàn 2022 jí zài xiàoshēng shēngyuè xì, měishēng yǎnchàng fāngxiàng, Lǐ Qīnghuá, Shāndōng Yìshù Xuéyuàn 2019 jí shēngyuè xì, měishēng yǎnchàng fāngxiàng, Zhào Chényáng].

<sup>19</sup> Sample Chinese repertoire, songs: *Yue Ren Ge*, *Si Xiang*, *Mei Gui San Yuan*, *Hong Dou Ci*, *WoZhuChang Jiang Tou*, *Mai Yi La BianZouQu*, *YanZi*, *WoAi Ni ZhongGuo* and *Sheng Si XiangYiWo Ku Lian Zhe Ni*; Italian pieces: *Ombra mai fu* (Haendel), *Se tum'ami* (Pergolesi) and *Vaga luna* (Donizetti).

Opera Performance and Ensemble Course is an obligatory course for third-year students; the classes are held once per week and last an hour and a half. The course combines group lectures with practice sessions in small groups. One opera is prepared each year – in 2024, for instance, it was *The Clemency of Titus* by W.A. Mozart. At the beginning of the academic year, students participate in group classes, during which the instructor carries out an in-depth analysis of the opera's plot and its style. Subsequently, students select roles and form duet pairs based on their vocal types. During weekly sessions, the instructor conducts a separate class for each group, offering them guidance with regard to singing, acting and line delivery. An important aspect of the course is the fact that students are required not only to master their own parts, but also to learn the vocal parts of their duet partners. In order to pass the course, students perform one of the duets and recite their partner's part from memory. Although the instructor may also organise a concert of opera duets, participation in it is not included in the final mark, and the event is not held every year.

**The three-year master's degree programme** involves solo *bel canto* singing in the form of individual lessons. These classes take place two times per week, last 45 minutes and are held without the regular presence of a piano accompanist. The contents of the course primarily include learning and performing works from various periods, composers and languages, which helps students to expand and accumulate a repertoire of *bel canto* compositions. Over the three years of studies, students are obliged to complete a work placement during which they must participate in at least four special concerts organised by the university<sup>20</sup>.

#### TEACHING MATERIALS AND TEXTBOOKS

The primary sheet music collection used in teaching *bel canto* singing at Shandong University of Arts is the four-volume publication entitled *Higher Art College Vocal Music Textbook Compendium of Bel canto Singing*, edited by Chen Xing<sup>21</sup>. This collection includes separate volumes intended for female and male voices. The table of contents in these volumes provides a detailed list of *bel canto* repertoire of varying difficulty levels – beginner, intermediate and advanced – constituting a source of information for both teachers and students.

<sup>20</sup> Source: <https://graduate.sdca.edu.cn/info/1045/1760.htm> [access: 15.07.2024]. 全日制艺术硕士（MFA）培养计划与课程设置, 山东艺术学院研究生处, 2017; [Quánrìzhì yìshù shuòshì (MFA) péiyǎng jìhuà yǔ kèchéng shèzhì, Shāndōng Yìshù Xuéyuàn Yánjiūshēng chù, 2017].

<sup>21</sup> 陈星主编, 高等艺术院校声乐教材精编美声唱法. 女生卷, 上海音乐出版社, 上海2018; [Chén Xīng zhǔbiān, Gāoděng yìshù yuànxào shēngyuè jiàocái jīngbiān měishēng chàngfǎ. Nǚshēng juǎn, Shànghǎi Yīnyuè Chūbǎnshè, Shànghǎi 2018]; Chen Xing, ed., *Higher Art College Vocal Music Textbook Compendium of Bel canto Singing. Girls' Test Papers*, Shanghai Music Publishing House, 2018.

The university also uses a textbook co-authored by Shandong University of Arts faculty members: Professor Zhu Dejiu from the Vocal Performance Department and Professor Jiang Xiaosu from the Piano Performance Department. It is entitled *Collection of Foreign Operas*<sup>22</sup> and contains not only sheet music – in the form of 529 arias from 158 operas – but also summaries of nearly 800 operas, biographies of 274 opera composers and indexes in foreign languages along with their Chinese translations.

#### ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

At bachelor's level, *bel canto* singing students are assessed based on the following criteria: singing examinations held twice a year, a final mark for the opera performance and participation in a duet concert in the third year, a singing examination in the fourth year and a mark for the written thesis. The final mark, which concludes the bachelor's studies, is based on all the examinations taken over the course of the programme. Performing a graduation recital is not obligatory, though the repertoire of the examination in the fourth year of studies consists of two selected *bel canto* pieces.

At master's level, singing examinations are held in each semester of the first and second year. In the fourth semester, an additional final mark is given, summarising the results from all subjects within the curriculum. In the third year, students prepare two graduation recitals, each lasting 50 minutes, and a written thesis.

#### 檀香刑, *SANDALWOOD PUNISHMENT*, A REPRESENTATIVE OPERA OF SHANDONG UNIVERSITY OF ARTS

The opera *Sandalwood Punishment* is the perfect reflection of the main goal of education at Shandong University of Arts – the integration of *bel canto* singing with traditional Chinese folk art and the preservation of regional cultural heritage. The opera is an adaptation of a novel under the same title by the Chinese writer and Nobel Prize winner Mo Yan. It was written in the style of the traditional Maoqiang opera<sup>23</sup>. The artistic form of Mo Yan's novel is discussed in an article by He Chengzhou, *Theater-fiction and hallucinatory realism in Mo Yan's The Sandalwood Death*<sup>24</sup>. The opera libretto adaptation of the novel was co-au-

<sup>22</sup> 外国歌剧荟萃, 朱德九, 蒋晓苏编辑, 山东文艺出版社, 山东 2003; [Wàiguó gējù huicùi, Zhū Déjiǔ, Jiǎng Xiǎosū biānjí, Shāndōng Wényì Chūbǎnshè, Shāndōng 2003].

<sup>23</sup> The description of this unique theatrical-musical form can be found in the doctoral dissertation of Li Chen, written in 2023 at Durham University (United Kingdom), see Li Chen, *Safeguarding Chinese Traditional Local Opera as Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Study of Maoqiang Opera in Shandong, China*, Durham theses, Durham University 2023, doctoral dissertation, source: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/14942/> [access: 19.11.2024]; see An Baijie, article from 17.06.2024, source: [http://shandong.chinadaily.com.cn/2024-06/17/c\\_996853.htm](http://shandong.chinadaily.com.cn/2024-06/17/c_996853.htm) [access: 10.12.2024].

<sup>24</sup> Chengzhou He, *Theater-fiction and hallucinatory realism in Mo Yan's The Sandalwood Death*,



thored by Mo Yan and Professor Li Yuntao of Shandong University of Arts, while the music was composed by Professor Li Yuntao. *Sandalwood Punishment* is an original work abundant in traditional cultural elements of Shandong province. Apart from using the Western opera form to tell a historical narrative about love, hate, life, death and the struggle for national freedom, the opera also contains references to the previously mentioned traditional Maoqiang opera and the Shandong Qinshu narrative singing form<sup>25</sup>. This vocal performance form, which has existed for more than 250 years, places emphasis on singing in the form of a dialogue.

Consisting of four main acts, the opera is set during the German colonial invasion on the Shandong peninsula in 1900 and tells the story of Sun Bing, a folk artist leading the anticolonial resistance movement. It was premiered on 23 June 2017 at the Grand Theatre in Shandong, and the main roles were performed by Shandong University of Arts professors, including the renowned Chinese singers Song Yuanming and Han Peng from the Shanghai Opera. All members of the choir were students of the undergraduate and graduate programmes at the Vocal Department, and the production was directed by the outstanding Chinese director Chen Wei. The Qingdao Symphony Orchestra was conducted by Zhang Guoyong, the dean of the Conducting Department at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In the years 2017–2018, *Sandalwood Punishment* was performed 18 times, and in 2018 a performance was held at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing<sup>26</sup>.

#### FACULTY MEMBERS OF THE SHANDONG UNIVERSITY OF ARTS VOCAL DEPARTMENT

The Vocal Department employs 17 teachers specialising in *bel canto* instruction<sup>27</sup>. Many of them are distinguished singers and experienced educators. Notable members of the faculty include Li Ao and Wang Ge Qun.

**Li Ao**, a baritone, was born in 1988 in Dezhou (Shandong). A member of the prestigious Merola Opera Program and Adler Fellow at the San Francisco Opera. Li Ao performed at prominent opera houses such as San Francisco Opera, Metropolitan Opera in New York, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, Utah Opera, North Carolina Opera, The National Opera of Belgium, National Centre

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“Orbis Litterarum” 2021, vol. 76, issue 4, published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd, United States (A&HCI).

<sup>25</sup> Source: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/m/shandong/shandongculture/2015-09/01/content\\_21772445.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/m/shandong/shandongculture/2015-09/01/content_21772445.htm) [access: 15.07.2024].

<sup>26</sup> 记者逢春阶报道, 大众日报 济南 Jǐnán, 2018: [Jìzhě Páng Chūnjiē bàodào, Dàzhòng Ribào], source: <https://xcb.sdca.edu.cn/info/1016/16662.htm> [access: 15.07.2024].

<sup>27</sup> Source: <https://yyxy.sdca.edu.cn/szdw/szdw/slx.htm> [access: 15.07.2024]; 山东艺术学院官方网站, 音乐学院, 声乐系师资队伍 2024; [Shāndōng Yìshù Xuéyuàn Guānfāng wǎngzhàn, Yīnyuè xuéyuàn, Shēngyuè xì shīzīduì 2024].

for the Performing Arts in China, The Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, National Theatre of Korea and Kaohsiung Opera in Taipei. Li Ao has won prizes at several singing competitions, including a bronze medal at the 8<sup>th</sup> National Vocal Competition of the Ministry of Culture of China (Wenhua Award) in 2008, the first prize in the men's category at the 2013 Domingo Operalia World Competition and Met Opera National Council Auditions in 2014, the second prize at the 2017 Shizuoka International Opera Competition in Japan and the third prize at the 2018 Queen Elizabeth International Competition in Belgium. On 25 October 2019, he won the *bel canto* category at the 12<sup>th</sup> China Music Golden Bell Award.

**Wang Ge Qun**, a tenor, was born in 1971 in Tai'an (Shandong). In 1994, he earned a bachelor's degree at Shandong University of Arts and continued his studies at Madame Zhou's Opera Centre at the Shanghai Conservatory. He was a Merola Fellow at the San Francisco Opera Centre in the years 1995–1996. He later studied at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where he obtained a Master of Music degree in 1999. Ge Qun also completed postgraduate studies at the San Francisco Music Conservatory in 2001. In 2009, he was invited by the Chinese pianist Lang Lang to debut at Carnegie Hall. In 2014, he completed an artistic internship at the Perugia Conservatory of Music in Italy. In 2011, he taught at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music Opera Centre as part of the International Opera Programme. Professor Ge Qun Wang sang the main parts in the productions of Los Angeles Opera and Philadelphia Opera Company. Furthermore, he was invited by the Chinese composer Jin Xiang to perform the leading tenor role in the operas *The Savage Land* and *The Overlord of Western Chu* at Lincoln Centre in New York.

## Conclusion

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when *bel canto* singing was first introduced to China, education in this field has evolved into a fully systematised discipline, which is particularly evident in the curricula of the 11 Chinese music conservatories. At first, the primary goal of teaching at these institutions was to achieve technical perfection; over time, however, pedagogical ideas which place equal emphasis on performance practice and vocal technique training were introduced. A very general analysis of *bel canto* education offered by Chinese universities leads to the following observation: *bel canto* singing programmes at different higher education institutions in China are clearly distinct. Broadly speaking, they may be categorised into two groups. The first are professional schools – conservatories and art universities. The curricula they follow include a number of practical subjects meant to prepare students to pursue a career as

solo singers. The *bel canto* singing programme represented by the Shanghai Conservatory of Music emphasises the internationalisation and professionalisation of education with a view to cultivating students' performance abilities and providing them with global career opportunities. On the other hand, specialised art universities such as Shandong University of Arts focus on integrating *bel canto* singing with traditional Chinese folk art. An example of this is the Chinese opera 檀香刑, *Sandalwood Punishment*, which reflects features unique for the musical culture of Shandong province.

The second group, considerably larger than the first, encompasses comprehensive and normal universities. An analysis of the vocal studies curriculum at Nanjing Normal University reveals a clear guiding principle with regard to teaching objectives at this type of institutions. Their curricula include unique courses such as teaching methodology and psychology. Furthermore, they emphasize the importance of ensuring comprehensive development of students, equipping them with competences necessary to take up employment as teachers, while simultaneously providing them with musical training in vocal performance.

*Bel canto* education in China continues to develop its distinctive features, integrating *bel canto* traditions with Chinese folk singing. Vocalists are increasingly trained with the use of not only sheet music collections of Western works in Chinese translations, which have been mentioned in the present article, but also recent compositions – traditional Chinese pieces of music adapted through the lens of the musical language of the West. Examples of such compositions include 玛依拉变奏曲, *Mayra Variations*, an art song by Hu Tingjiang based on a Kazakh folk song. An analysis of the melody, rhythm and adaptation of the folk original into the classical form of Western music is found in the doctoral dissertation of the Chinese singer Yinghua Yang<sup>28</sup>. Another example is 在银色的月光下, *Under the Silver Moon*, by Wang Luobin, an adaptation of a Russian folk song which simultaneously represents the folk music style of Xinjiang province. What is more, there are art songs which combine *bel canto* singing with ancient Chinese poetry such as 我住长江头, *My Sentiment to the Yangtze River*, by Liao Shangguo, 红豆词, *Song of the Red Bean*, by Liu Xue'an and 虞美人-春花秋月何时了, *The Beautiful Lady*, by Wang Long.

The development of vocal education has an indirect influence on the creation and promotion of new operas inspired by classical Chinese poetry adapted into the European opera form. They include operas such as 楚霸王, *The King of Chu*, by Jin Xiang, 张骞, *Zhang Qian*, composed by Zhang Yulong, 伤逝,

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<sup>28</sup> J. Yang, *Zastosowanie i rozwój śpiewu koloraturowego w chińskich kompozycjach wokalnych na głos sopranowy w kontekście adaptacji dorobku sztuki wokalne bel canto*, computer printout of a doctoral dissertation, supervised by Professor Katarzyna Suska-Zagórska, The Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Krakow, Kraków 2022.

*Regret for the Past*, by Shi Guangnan, 苍原, *Zan Yuen*, co-authored by Xu Zhanhai and Liu Hui, and 白毛女, *The White-Haired Girl*, by the female composer Yan Jinxuan<sup>29</sup>, as well as the recent English-language work 红楼梦, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, by Bright Sheng<sup>30</sup>.

An in-depth analysis of the development and characteristics of contemporary Chinese national opera can be found in the 2021 publication by Xiaomei Chen, Tarryn Li-Min Chun and Siyuan Liu, *Performance Practice and Debate in the Mao Era, Rethinking Chinese Socialist Theaters of Reform*<sup>31</sup>.

Despite the great strides that have been made, Chinese *bel canto* vocal education faces multiple challenges. The primary issues arise from the incomplete nature of the teaching system, i.e. curricular shortcomings. The curricula are often excessively focused on vocal technique training, neglecting the development of students' musical perception and expressive abilities. Noticeable is the lack of qualified teachers with expertise in teaching *bel canto* theory and practice at an advanced level. There is also a dearth of high quality teaching materials.

Another problem is the lack of opportunities for stage practice and emphasis on theory and technical training at the expense of practical classes. This has a detrimental effect on the development of students, who quickly lose enthusiasm for vocal art. Ensuring a greater focus on stage practice in the curriculum would certainly increase the appeal of *bel canto* studies, potentially boosting the number of students choosing this field of study.

In assessing *bel canto* education, it is also necessary to account for the limitations stemming from cultural differences and different aesthetic preferences between Chinese and Western societies. As a result of these discrepancies, the audience with an interest in *bel canto* art in China is rather small. *Bel canto* studies are therefore somewhat elite and continue to be underdeveloped. Adding the limited potential for live distribution of vocal art and the general dominance of popular music in mass media, it is fairly easy to explain the marginalisation of stage performances and record publishing. Moreover, employment opportunities for solo singers specialising in *bel canto* singing are in short supply in China. Thus, further efforts are necessary to promote Western vocal art and expand the prospects for academic and artistic exchange at an international scale. In such

<sup>29</sup> Rong Jiang, *Delineating Modern Chinese Opera Through White-Haired Girl*, "International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development" 2024, vol. 13, no. 1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPEd/v13-i1/20789>.

<sup>30</sup> Xirui Huang, *The Musical Style and the Cultural Connotation of Bright Sheng's Opera Dream of the Red Chamber*, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Pro Quest Dissertations & Theses, 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Xiaomei Chen, Tarryn Li-Min Chun and Siyuan Liu, *Rethinking Chinese Socialist Theaters of Reform. Performance Practice and Debate in the Mao Era*, University of Michigan Press, United States, 2021.

circumstances, Chinese *bel canto* education would undoubtedly have the potential to better display its unique character on the global stage, while adhering to international standards and simultaneously prioritising local development.

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## Struktura edukacji w zakresie europejskiej sztuki wokalnej *bel canto* we współczesnych Chinach

### Streszczenie

Początki nauczania zachodniej sztuki wokalnej *bel canto* w Chinach datuje się na lata 30. XX wieku. W ciągu niemal stulecia *bel canto* zakorzeniło się w kulturze muzycznej Państwa Środka. Śpiew *bel canto* nie jest jednak dominującym nurtem w edukacji wokalnej Chin, albowiem Chińczycy pieczołowicie kultywują tradycje śpiewu występujące tutaj w wielorakiej postaci, nacechowane niezwykle różnorodnością i charakterystyką wielu grup etnicznych. Pomimo trudności w przyswajaniu i zrozumieniu stylu muzyki Zachodu, szkolnictwo w dziedzinie śpiewu *bel canto* rozwija się w Chinach dynamicznie, co świadczy o fascynacji zarówno technikami, jak i stylem śpiewu *bel canto*. Na światowych scenach pojawia się coraz więcej znakomicie wykształconych artystów – śpiewaków chińskich, którzy stosunkowo często doskonalą swoje umiejętności, kształcąc się w Europie i USA. Najwybitniejsi również często powracają do Chin, aby przekazywać swoją wiedzę i doświadczenie nowym generacjom.

Artykuł niniejszy jest próbą syntetycznego opisanie struktury edukacji w dziedzinie wokalistyki, która w Chinach powszechnie utożsamiana jest z „zachodnią” techniką śpiewu oraz z repertuarem operowym określanym wspólnym mianem *bel canto*. W artykule przedstawiono charakterystykę edukacji w wybranych uczelniach chińskich, w aspektach sposobu oraz programu nauczania śpiewu *bel canto*, wymiaru godzin, głównych celów edukacji oraz zasad weryfikacji efektów kształcenia. Podano także informacje o używanych w szkolnictwie wokalnym zbiorach nut i podręcznikach oraz o wybitnych pedagogach śpiewu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** edukacja wokalna, wokalistyka, chińskie uniwersytety, *bel canto*, programy nauczania.