

**THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN CLASSICAL  
SINGING METHOD ON THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY  
CHINESE NATIONAL VOCAL MUSIC**

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**CULTURAL CENTRE  
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KUALA LUMPUR**

**2019**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF PERFORMING ARTS  
(MUSIC)**

**CULTURAL CENTRE  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR**

**2019**

**UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA**  
**ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION**

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**The Influence of Western Classical Music Singing method on The 21st Century Chinese National Vocal Music**

Field of Study: Music Education

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the integration of Western classical singing methods in China's national vocal music. The research is in the field of vocal pedagogy, particularly on Western classical singing and the development of Chinese national vocal music. This research includes the analysis of the Western and Chinese classical singing methods, the historical analysis of the influence of Western classical singing on Chinese national vocal music, and the case study of the Chinese famous lyric soprano Wu Bixia, the pioneer on the integration of Western classical singing methods on the Chinese national vocal music. In the art of singing, there are many similarities in Chinese and Western vocal music (specifically with the new *Nazionale cantanti* and *bel canto*), and this research will analyze Wu Bixia's singing methods and her theory of integrating Western classical singing into Chinese vocal music.

Keywords: Chinese-Western singing style, *bel canto* singing, WuBiXia's singing style, vocal pedagogy

## **ABSTRAK**

Tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk menyiasat penyepaduan kaedah nyanyian klasik Barat dalam muzik vokal kebangsaan China. Penyelidikan ini terlibat dalam bidang pedagogi vokal, terutama pada nyanyian klasik Barat dan pembangunan muzik vokal kebangsaan Cina. Kajian ini merangkumi analisis kaedah nyanyian klasik Barat dan Cina, analisis sejarah pengaruh nyanyian klasik Barat terhadap muzik vokal kebangsaan Cina, dan kajian kes soprano lirik terkenal China Wu Bixia, perintis mengenai integrasi Barat kaedah nyanyian klasik pada muzik vokal kebangsaan Cina. Dalam seni nyanyian, terdapat banyak kesamaan dalam muzik vokal Cina dan Barat (khususnya dengan cantion Nazionale baru dan bel canto), dan penyelidikan ini akan menganalisis kaedah penyanyi Wu Bixia dan teorinya menggabungkan nyanyian klasik Barat ke dalam muzik vokal Cina.

Keywords: Gaya penyanyi Cina-Barat, bel canto, gaya nyanyian WuBiXia, pedagogi vokal

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Cheong Ku Wing for the continuous support in my Master study and research, for her patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. Moreover, thanks to my friends from University of Malaya in supporting me throughout my study.

Further, I would like to send my deepest gratitude to my beloved parents for their permanent support, love and encouragements. Besides my parents, I would like to thank to my husband for his spiritual support.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Music is a vital art in the development of human civilisation, due to the background and the development of history and cultures, music around the world had totally influenced by these histories and create the unusual features and genres. Certainly, vocal art in Western Classical has also become an important status in the development of human civilisation; the artworks of vocal have influenced the amateurs and enthusiasts of vocal around the world. Similarly, vocal arts in China also established its history and possessed its own characteristics and features.

In China, there are consists of 56 ethnics and each of the ethnics comprises of its own characteristics. They follow their own cultural interests and habits to construct and develop their own singing technique, Nazionale cantanti in Italian, which means National singing. The techniques of National singing in China involve four styles: opera-singing, folk-singing, primitive singing technique and new National singing. The new National singing is the new creation in China, which is different from the folk-singing and opera-singing method, mainly “borrowing” the Western scientific singing methods and techniques.

### 1.2 Fusion between the Western singing method and Chinese folk-singing method

Zhao (2006) outlined the development of opera in China. In Zhao’s study, it was stated that the art of opera emerged and evolved in China about 6 decades ago combining the Western aesthetic with the Chinese, such as ‘Liu San Jie’ (刘三姐) ; ‘Cao Yuan Zhi Ge’ (草原之歌) ; and ‘Hong Shang Hu’(红珊瑚) . These works not only inherit the vocal method of Chinese folk songs but also drawing lessons from the vocal principle of bel

canto, assimilates the advantages of bel canto in breathing, sound production and resonating, which make the Chinese National vocal method more systematic.

Due to the impact of influence of Western music, the inherent habit of Chinese traditional vocal music had imperceptibly influenced the Chinese singers. From the 80's of the last century, Chinese singers began a systematic study and research on the Western singing, the characteristics of Chinese National singing which integrate the scientific method of bel canto vocal technique from the Western to improve and create a new standard of the Chinese folk vocal singing method. There were several eminent China's national singers, namely, Peng Liyuan, Wu Bixia, Song Zuying, Zhang Ye and others.

Among these eminent singers, Wu Bixia has significant contribution in investigating the differentiation of Western Classical music singing and Chinese National singing method. Through years of vocal training and a large number of Chinese and foreign professional vocal music learning and exploration, she had mastered the Chinese National content and work with the foreign vocal works in the two different styles of singing method, which is the first Chinese-Western singing vocalist and lead her to receive the highest international awards singer (Chuang, 2016).

This study focusses on Wu Bixia's contribution on the development of integrating bel canto singing technique and Chinese National vocal music; it also aims to investigate differences of Western and Chinese singing method and the impact and influence of this integration in vocal pedagogy in 21<sup>st</sup> century China.

Wu Bixia was born in 1975 in Changde, Hunan, China, a famous lyric soprano in China. Her representative works are 'China Niuniu' (中国妞妞), 'La Traviata' (茶花女) and others. Her main achievements include first prize in Nazionale cantanti in National Vocal Competition, International Youth Arts Festival Gold Award, on the International on the Vocal Competition. Wu Bixia continued her learning in folk singing

when she was studying in China National Vocal Music Conservatory, her college she attended had set up foreign vocal music appreciation with the aim of establishing students' horizon, and since then Wu Bixia started her vocal learning with the exposure to bel canto. Her famous vocal singing teacher, Jin Tielin, advised her on the future plan and she is persistent in learning the vocal pedagogy and technique in a more systematic way of singing foreign works.

When she was a child, she already learned drums, Peking Opera and Shaoxing opera; these artistic forms also made her singing style a unique charm in her artistic attainments. Wu Bixia sang both the Chinese and Western music singing works in her own irreplaceable way, as the result of her specialty in singing, which deriving from her singing skills and aesthetics of vocal music, and she clearly recognized the characteristics of the two-singing method, and the fusion of two styles produces a great charm.

Since 2000, Wu Bixia started her eight solo concerts in Beijing, Liaoning, Hunan, Singapore et cetera, published six solo albums, and participated in a number of international performances by internationally renowned composers, conductors, and instrumentalists.

This chapter take one art song from Wu Bixia to simple analysis, 'Yi Bei Mei Jiu' (一杯美酒), it is classic folk song from Xinjian of China. Chinese folk songs contain the characteristics of people's living flavour and people's life sustenance. From the tonality and rhythm, these folk songs have strong local characteristics and used by most vocal music educators as a teaching tracks. Further, many vocalists perform these folk songs as their repertoire. Among them the most famous are the bel canto version by Dilber Yunus and Chinese National version by Wu Bixia, she mastered the importance of breathing in vocal music, and adopted approach of the thoracic-abdominal respiration (Fan, 2015).

Wu Bixia singing ‘Yi Bei Mei Jiu’ (一杯美酒) not only inherits the essence of traditional folk singing but also boldly absorption of Western bel canto vocalisation methods. Her sound natural, incisively and vividly expresses the content of the song.

♩ = 80

我的爱情 像杯美酒 一杯美 酒

心上人 请你把它 接 受

天山上的 雄鹰只会 盘旋不飞 过山顶

情人围 绕着我 不愿离 走

Figure 1.1: Part of melody from the song Yi Bei Mei Jiu, 一杯美酒

### 1.3 The influence of Western Classical music singing method on Chinese National vocal music

Due to the impact of Western culture in China, Western music singing also had imperceptibly influenced the Chinese peoples. The transmission of Western Classical vocal art in China has promoted the reformation of Chinese vocal music. Since the reformation, the Chinese people have gradually understood about the Western cultural.

Lang (2011) outlined that Western music education started earlier in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, which has been a more systematic theory of vocal music education, In

Western vocal singing technique, bel canto is the scientific singing method generally acknowledged by the people, is the creation of the singing method from Italy in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, experiencing hundred years of the development and history influence. Before early stage of vocal music development in China 1840s, there was no theory of vocal music education because of its historical background, Most of the music theories were based on the Western music theory and “music” had become one of the common languages of the world in 1898, Reforms Movement established a Western-Chinese school, advocating the learning from the West, promoting science and culture, and opening vocal classes. New music movement in China was aroused as Western culture music entered. The combination of Western scientific singing method and Chinese folk singing method has becoming a vital at present in the development of singing style in China (Zhang, 2013).

Chinese folk music developed rapidly in China after the new culture. There are many vocal music-lovers learning Chinese National vocal music, and until now the Western Classical music singing and Chinese National vocal music and pop music are the three main vocal subjects in the China music academy. The majority of Chinese vocal music in the professional music college retains the original tradition of vocal music on the basis of “borrowing” Western vocal techniques and techniques of new vocal art forms of expression, the Chinese National vocal music conjunction of the bel canto technique essence, in order to improve the artistic taste of audiences, to develop modern folk art songs and the opera which increase the progress of the Chinese vocal industry.

Nowadays, Western music in China's music industry holds a very important position. Some people might think of the propagation of Western music on Chinese folk music was a cultural shock while, in fact, this has opened a new era of Chinese vocal condition (Xiao, 2008).

#### **1.4 Problem statement**

The transmission of Western music singing to Chinese vocal music in China is obvious, but some of the people think that it brings the situation of “re-western lightness” to vocal music education in China. Jiao (2013) indicate that although China music school education was mainly used Western music theory system since in last century but resulting most of the people conclusion is the Western music theory is a scientific. In creation works, the Chinese music education not only used Western music genre and also using the westernisation of music thinking, and it might affect the future of Chinese music education and indirectly affect the cultural heritage of ethnic music (Zhang, 2011).

By using the Western Classical music singing method on the Chinese National vocal music, some people think that it is nondescript. They believe that the traditional Chinese singing should be in the orthodox and the right way of singing. This is due to the different historical background of the development of the West and China. For the language, Chinese people might go through a long time to training and research if they want to learn Western singing method in order to develop the new vitality of vocal. Wu Bixia was representing the modern Chinese’s National vocal music that had broken the “Western singing” and “National singing” concepts of cross-border points, people perceived that her voice and singing technique have not have enough power. These problems will be discussed explicitly in the Chapter Four.

### **1.5 Purpose of the study**

The following are the research objectives of this study:

1. To identify the fusion of Western Classical music singing method and Chinese vocal singing method.
2. To investigate the singing method of Wu Bixia, which her combination of Western singing style and Chinese singing method.
3. To examine the impact of fusion of Western classical singing on the Chinese National vocal singing.

### **1.6 Research questions**

1. What are the influences of Western Classical music singing method on Chinese National vocal music?
2. How does the integration of Western Classical music singing method and Chinese National Vocal music have an impact on the 21<sup>st</sup> century Chinese vocal pedagogy and performance?
3. What are the influences of Wu Bixia singing method on Chinese National vocal music?

## **1.7 Conceptual framework**

This research is qualitative in nature and the data collection and analyses are based on an interpretation account. According to Shearer (2016), case study requires analysing, applying knowledge, reasoning and drawing conclusion to a real situation.

The research approaches taken to the outcome of the research objectives towards a discussion of the Western Classical vocal music and Chinese National vocal music through participants' interviews.

## **1.8 Organisation of the study**

The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter forms the foundation for understanding the context within this study. This section discusses the vocal music, the historical development of Western vocal music and Chinese vocal music and the relationship between them.

Chapter 2 of this study discusses the Western Classical music singing method and Chinese National vocal music and a case study of Wu Bixia. All the information requires a rationale for the study and current research.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology, research design which is qualitative research method, data collection procedures through in-depth interview and data analysis procedure.

Chapter 4 is the findings from fieldwork, explaining the vocal of Western and Chinese National vocal music. Data collection analysis is used bel canto method on the Chinese National vocal music from the case study by Wu Bixia artistic work.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusion by summarizing the meaning of development of Western Classical music singing method on the Chinese National vocal music. This is based on the findings to support the research's conclusions.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a succinct discussion of the relevant constructs related to this study. A literature review is a major section in pre-fieldwork; it provides the researcher about the background information in order to identify the divergence in the literature, forming research questions and research objectives. This research mainly focuses on the historical context of Western Classical music singing and Chinese National vocal music, including cultures, integration, bel canto operatic singing and Chinese folk singing, vocal skills and analysis of the case study representative of Wu Bixia.

The sections of the literature are presented and organized according to the following headings: (1) Chinese National vocal music; (2) Western Classical music singing; (3) Relationships between Chinese and Western singing; (4) Influencing factors on the integration of Western vocal music and Chinese National vocal; (5) Pioneers of Chinese National vocal music; and (6) Wu Bixia's influence on Chinese National vocal music. The following discusses each construct accordingly.

#### 2.2 Chinese National vocal music

In general, the development of the ancient Chinese folk vocal music began with the birth of the chanting from the primitive labour, which was from the “singing-signal” to the formation of the original form of music combined with the song, dance and music, and later evolved into various operas, and folk songs and so on, and further developed

to the Tang dynasty, Song dynasty, Yuan dynasty, Ming dynasty and Qing dynasty folk songs and opera, which the song activities become a distinct art (Zhao, 2006).

Furthermore, due to the singing methods were quite acceptable, simple and usual, the development of Chinese national vocal music had a strong influential to the people. However, there were lacking the knowledge of human physiology and physiological function in the process of training of their Chinese national vocal music. Hence, there was a limitation in vocal technique in the early Chinese national vocal music.

The ancient roots of Chinese National vocal music can be drawn back to 21<sup>st</sup> century BC, a man named 'DA-Yu' (大禹). He was so busy engaged with his work that he could not find time to go home to be with his family. His wife then sang "The Song of Waiting" to have the hope for waiting for his return. This can be considered as one of the earliest origins of Chinese National Vocalist (Zhao, 2006).

The earliest poetry collection in China was 'Shi Jing' (诗经). 'Shi Jing' (诗经) was the beginning of the China poetry, a total of 311 pieces, describing from the Western Zhou Dynasty to the Spring and Autumn poetry in the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC to 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. There were no specific authors to clarify. Qin dynasty established and valued music after the development of Chinese ancient feudal period (221 BC) which was ended in 220 (A.D.) In this historical period, there were professionals who started to create, compose, arrange, rearrange and collecting the voice of pronunciation (Zhao, 2006).

Zhao (2005) also stated starting from the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), vocal music reached to an unprecedented period of prosperity and development, accumulating around 1000 and above musician, conducting their creative works and indirectly fostering vocal and dance talents. It was indicated that in this historical era as the beginning of the development of Chinese vocal music.

In the history of Chinese music, there were lots of valuable collections of pieces such as Song-drama, Yuan opera, Kun Qu opera and others, until the Beijing opera started to widely propagate in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), in which numerous professional training classes have been offered. Regarding to the theatre artistic pursuit of precision, they were very strict to their students, and remaining various appreciated and valued vocal theories. These processes had indirectly influenced to the next generation on their fundamental vocal development in the later centuries (Tao, 1992; Zeng, 2005).

The China music from different ethnicity in China, Chinese vocal music is not only different from folk songs but also different from opera. It is inherited the characteristics of traditional singing styles and combining the singing, theory of Western bel canto singing. Chinese vocal music developed a new National singing style which bringing out the scientific, nationality, artistic and contemporary features of singing art.

Wu (2008) stated that Chinese National vocal music was the result of the combination of both ancient Chinese music and Western music aesthetic perception. The characteristics of singing style involved the lyrics, the musical context, the integration of sensibility, the coexistence of traditional style and the modern ambience. Zeng (2005) mentioned that people started to have the awareness about the importance of breathing in singing in the past thousand years ago. Qiao (2002) documented that ‘Duan Anjie’ (段安杰) of the Tang Dynasty recorded the singing technique by using the breathing of the diaphragm (丹田) which can be seen in ‘Yue Fu Za Lu’ (乐府杂录)

‘Yue Fu Chuan Sheng’ (乐府传声) the earliest breathing method of traditional Chinese vocal music was the combination of diaphragm, lungs and chest cavity of breathing technique. The effect of Chinese National vocal music requirements the fullness of articulation, from the emotions, the charms, and the intonation achieve a

unified. Essentially, the singer must sustain the hearty, and keep the deep breathing (Zhao, 2006).

From the 1920s and 1930s, Western Classical music singing was introduced to China and the new generation of Chinese artists began to ponder if Western vocal music arts and techniques could be combined with Chinese National vocal music; especially the new government of China was newly launched and encouraged new thinking.

The integration of Western Classical music singing with Chinese National vocal music had summed up into three benefits: (1) high position on vocalization; (2) the combination of chest and lungs breathing method; and (3) face-emotion resonance. These were attempted to create a new trending of national vocal music teaching model and to achieve a better result. For example, when the Chinese National vocal music reference the Western's singing style by using closed-accent singing, although it is closed-accent but if open throat which indirectly solved the closed-accent and nasal singing style (Xu, 2002).

According to Guo (2009), 'Bai Mao Nu' (白毛女) premiered its first performance at the opera house in Yan'an, China. This piece inherited the Chinese folk music, traditional style and use of Western opera forms to achieve success which representing a milestone in the exploration of Chinese opera. The 'Bai Mao Nu' (白毛女) also successfully induced a new enthusiast group of literary and art workers to create some renowned opera works, such as 'Lan Hua Hua' (蓝花花), 'Liu Hu Lan' (刘胡兰) and others. These musical works have opened a new path of opera in China. Guo (2009) stated that after entering to the era of New China, there were large number of outstanding new folk songs created which include 'Chun Tian De Gu Shi' (春天的故事), 'Zou Jin Xin Shi Dai' (走进新时代), 'Chang Cheng Chang' (长城长) and modern new operas such as 'Dang De Nu Er' (党的女儿).

These operatic works had infused the Western's music composition style, with the combination of Western's bel canto vocal techniques and national singing. This innovative musical thought motivated and propelled the infusion of the Chinese and Western vocal techniques and skills to a new peak. Zhang and Yan (2006) discussed that the development of Chinese National vocal music has experienced in these three periods through the changes of modern times and the development of economic and technological development and the artists of the three periods had representing the Chinese National vocal music, Guo Lanying (郭兰英), Peng Liyuan (彭丽媛), and Wu Bixia (吴碧霞).

Guo Lanying (郭兰英) was born in 1930. She learnt from the vocal methods of Chinese opera (Xiao, 2008). Her voice was simple, bright and yet enchanting. Her works had deeply influenced the people in her era. Peng Liyuan (彭丽媛) born in 1962, learning the Chinese operas singing methods through her excellent teacher and seniors. She also drew on the essence of Western's bel canto singing method and gradually opened up a new path of singing style with the integration of Chinese folk singing and Western singing culture. Wu Bixia (吴碧霞) was born in 1975, many music lovers around the world had commended her as "The Integration of Chinese and Western Nightingale" (Liu, 2009; Zhao, 2010). She skilfully mastered two different styles of Chinese vocal music and Western vocal music. She was the only successful Chinese singer in China who had combined Chinese singing and receiving the highest honour. Her studies and exploration had led the national singing method to more perfection and finesse in the traditional singing in China (Wu, 2008).

As per Xiao (2008) cited in the research, the Chinese National vocal music actively changed during the development of China, from the richness of the art forms, the adaptation and creation of those artworks to the diversification of the themes and those works were going through new breakthroughs. The singers managed to create the

work based on the singing characteristics and vocal range with the fundamental of music knowledge, which creating the works that are non-stereotyped, fashionable and more vivid. Diversification of the themes of the works had gradually become the propaganda of positive energy in whole China and also represented as the theme song of historical drama.

Due to the rapid development of the Internet in this modern world, Chinese National vocal music has widely spread to the world through social media. A traditional vocal method used to sing the pop songs and uploaded to the internet and shared to the world. It has also become a useful medium for young vocalists to share their talents. Although those Chinese National songs are not perfectly demonstrated but the trend of the national vocal music seems to be perfectly development in young vocalists.

### **2.3 Western Classical singing music**

Jiao (2013) stated that the development of Western culture was influenced by the religious and church choirs and developed the idea of vocal music and singing techniques to the believers. Back to the history of Western music, religious songs and sacred music represented as a vital element in the development of Western vocal music. Vocal arts had risen rapidly in all regions in Europe in 13<sup>th</sup> century. Rome was the largest transmission of music in Europe. At that time, there were several excellent vocal artists widely used the polyphony singing, music technique that had promoted the essence of the music especially in Italy. The polyphony singing style was represented as a decorative musical style that makes music more beautiful and melodious in which showed the great contributions element in music history.

Bel canto singing was a historical phenomenon which embraced Italian opera in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Mayr (2017) stated that in the Renaissance period, the

development of the Netherlands choir and cappella choir had brought the art of polyphony chorus to the peak, and the expanding choral arts and the art of solo singing. The artists also had begun the scientific study about vocal techniques on the church music and folk music, singing technique and also how each of the singing technique can interact and complement the developmental process. This has laid an important foundation for the opera singing and bel canto singing (Dan, 2011).

Stark (2003) stated that bel canto is a term in search of a meaning, a label that is widely used but only vaguely understood, literally means “beautiful singing”. Bel canto was represented as a very sophisticated age in the operatic history, mainly referring to the well-known composer in the classical period and the romantic period, such as Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, and also Meyerbeer who representing the European countries.

Generally, bel canto was used as a Western Classical singing music system developed and matured with the birth of Western opera. Therefore, bel canto is increasingly referring to a specific vocal period and cannot represent all Western vocal music. But sometimes people remained using bel canto which vaguely refers to the Western Classical vocal music method. However, the term ‘Classical music’ has the same ambiguity in the development of contemporary Western music.

Niu (2009) also stated that using bel canto in the Baroque and Classical period musical works had rigorous, balanced, smooth and coherent vocal styles in term of participle features and artistry principles. Besides, Baroque’s period musical works also possess more complex coloratura singing techniques, while the classical period was using the symmetrical, clear, and moderately formal style.

Bel canto was most important in the development of human vocal music history. From the Holy Music in Renaissance period, people started to continue pursuing the natural and relaxed singing styles. Bel canto was based on the development of the opera

singing. Along with the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Castrato had successfully stepped onto the stage in the history.

Moreover, everything has had its highs and lows. Thus, every progress was carried out in denied, and the affirmation in negation was the key point to move the ideas toward to another destination. As the Castrato gradually faded out of sight, the golden age of the bel canto also went with the flow. The deaf singers have contributed to the development of bel canto. Yu (2010) indicated that many deaf singers had become excellent vocal teachers and also made a tremendous contribution to the development of the opera and the improvement of singing techniques.

According to Li (2012), Baroque originated from Portuguese. In music, people often referred to the European culture from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Baroque period had acquired many achievements, such as the formation of the tone system, harmonic progression in the major and minor key system which indirectly cultivated the well-known musician Monteverdi, Handel, Bach, while the most important development was the appearance of the opera.

The vocal style of bel canto is specifically the sound resonance amplification, true and false sound effect and the sound quality with the help of technology, the pursuit of clean sound without impurities, mellow and flexible. The expression of the works was depending on the emotion. The vocal lines can appear in smooth, beautiful, light and dramatic expression as the emotional changes of the works gradually change based on dynamics, tempo and performance expression.

The main characteristics of bel canto's vocal music exhibited the relaxing and natural wider sound range, and the strong penetration of sound. It requires the singer to sing the high pitches with the half of energy in order to minimise the strong attack of high pitches sound. It emits the breathing from the chest, which the air flows through a

smooth passage to send the sound from the upper position of the head, also explained as resonance (Tian, 2006 & Ji, 2013).

The characteristics of bel canto were summed up in eight words: strong, brightness, mellowness, powerful, pure, relaxing, versatile and soft. Lang (2011) indicated that the vocal cords are relaxing and yet flexible when singing in the style of bel canto. Bel canto has its own singing technique that is, deep breathing, penetration of the voice, and wide range of pitch, large volume and the sound versatility. Certainly, the most important characteristic that differentiates the bel canto singing methods from other singing methods is using the mixed chorus. Bel canto probably uses the lower throat position singing method to have the low-pitched vocalization to create the sound that full of metallic colour and resonance sound quality. In the process of singing, syntactic consistency, sound flexibility, hardness and softness, are being focused (Yu, 2010). With the social development in culture and art, bel canto has experienced hundreds of years of development and changes, and it has become a comprehensive concept, complete with scientific, systematic sounding method and vocal style (Cheng, 2013).

#### **2.4 Relationships between Chinese National vocal music and Western Classical music singing**

Yuan (2010) stated that Chinese traditional vocal music had assimilated the Western Classical vocal music's skills and theory and created a new art form called the Chinese National vocal music after hundred years of development. Similar findings have been made in (Tao, 1992; Ji, 2013). Su (2012) stated that since the beginning of 1950s, there has been controversy about the methods of Chinese vocal singing and Western Classical music singing. Another researcher Huang (2017) stated that studying Western vocal

music and Chinese traditional singing is not incompatible but they were complimentary to each other, and advocate people to study Western Classical singing technique and to develop the new Chinese singing music further.

In China, the bel canto had widely developed for nearly a hundred years where it first settled in Shanghai. After the First World War, due to the European world war and the open policy in the late Qing and early Republic of China, people with different nationalities from different countries influxes in China with their own culture and customs especially in Shanghai. The vibrant business environment and rich cultural background also attracted a number of cultural and musical artists to come to Shanghai and developed Shanghai as a modern city that have similarities with the Western culture

In the early 1920s, the first music school in China was established in Shanghai. The school system and curriculum were largely modelled in European music schools. In addition to a large number of Western music courses, some instrumental music had also introduced such as trumpet, saxophone, accordion and others. Gradually, bel canto gained its popularity and developed rapidly in China in the past 100 years. Many professional or amateur singers untiringly worked hard to improve and shape the Chinese folk songs systematically by learning and researching the aesthetic and essence of bel canto (Lang, 2011).

## **2.5 Western Classical music singing methods on the Chinese traditional vocal music**

The ontogeny of the Western Classical singing music occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe, which is earlier than China. Burkholder and Grout (2010) stated that the singing teachers studied the art of singing scientifically and applied it in their training. Therefore, the techniques of bel canto are studied and researched by many scientists.

Similar to the findings made by Stark (2003) stated that there have been cultural conflicts between the Chinese traditional singing and the bel canto, and the traditional singing should maintain their styles and quintessence's and also accept foreign advancement, such as the theory and method of bel canto.

## **2.6 Infusion of Chinese National vocal music and bel canto**

Zheng (2005) stated that even though the development of the Chinese National singing is diversified and different from the Western Classical singing music, they have the same laws in sound-producing theories. Wang (2008) and Zheng (2005) that the similarities between the bel canto and Chinese National vocal music are the breathing, word articulation, diction, and cavity resonance method. Hu (2008) stated that the application of the methods of bel canto on the Chinese National singing, make it different from the Chinese traditional singing, such as the artistic effect, sound effect, and performance effect.

## **2.7 Pioneers of Chinese National vocal music**

Fan (2015) wrote in the 1920s that Chinese traditional singing was influenced by the culture of Western Classical singing. After a long period of culture exchange, Chinese composers produced new art song. Fan (2015) also wrote that Qing Shan (秦山) produced his first art song 'Da Jiang Dong Qu' (大江东去) when he studied in Germany. Other representative works include Xiao Youmei's (萧友梅) 'Wen' (问) and Zhao Yuanren's (赵元任) 'Jiao Wo Ru He Bu Xiang Ta' (叫我如何不想她) which implemented creative concepts from the West and sang in Western Classical singing method. Tan (2012) wrote that in the 1930s, a group of excellent Chinese vocal artists travelled to Europe to study the Western vocal music and its singing techniques.

By 1949, China already had a number of excellent bel canto teachers and artists, namely Zhou Shuan (周爽), Zhang Quan (张全), Zhou Xiaoyan (周小燕), Shen Xiang (沈湘) and others. They returned to China and promoted the development of Chinese traditional vocal music. Tan (2012) also wrote that in the 1950s, some of the most influential vocal artists are Guo Shuzhen (郭淑珍), Yang Hongji (杨洪基), Wu Yanze (吴雁泽) and others. In the 80s, many young and middle-aged vocal artists emerged, such as Wu Bixia (吴碧霞), Jiang Dawei (蒋大为), and Dai Yuqiang (戴玉强).

After 80 years of developmental progress and process, Chinese traditional singing artists have made fruitful achievements on the integration of Western Classical singing methods in the Chinese traditional music and Ji (2013) believed that the bel canto has established a scientific vocal music system after hundreds of years of dissemination. It is an inevitable trend that the national singing method borrows from the bel canto method. From the way of singing, from the singing repertoire, it has a positive influence on Chinese National vocal music.

From a historical point of view, since the entry of the singing-art and aesthetic to China, Chinese artists began to experiment the integration of the Chinese traditional singing method and bel canto, for instances, the 'Huang He Da He Chang' (黄河大合唱) in 1940s, it was a famous work in which the using the integration of Chinese traditional singing method with the Western Classical singing. There are also many outstanding Chinese artists in whom their composition had both the typical of Chinese folk singing and the Western singing method. For example, 'Wo Ai Ni Zhong Guo' (我爱你, 中国) by Li Shuangjiang (李双江), Guan Mucun (关牧村) 'Tu Lu Fan De Pu Tao Shu Le' (吐鲁番的葡萄熟了), and Dai Yuqiang (戴玉强) 'Ni Shi Zhe Yang De Ren' (你是这样的人).

## **2.8 Wu Bixia's influence on Chinese National vocal music**

Hu (2013) stated that Wu Bixia is one of the most eminent and dynamic vocal artists. In China, the term “Wu Bixia phenomenon” is used to describe the fusion of the Western Classical singing method and the Chinese National singing. This innovative practice made the pioneering progress on the development of the Chinese National vocal music. Bai (2004) also mentioned about Wu Bixia's sound producing method which is based on bel canto method and the “Wu Bixia phenomenon” fully proves that Chinese vocal music reference and usage of bel canto techniques can develop Chinese National vocal music. Zhao (2010) states Wu Bixia broke the boundary between Chinese vocal singing and Western Classical singing music, and she had advocated the relationships between the two singing methods that they can be integrated and learns from each other in mutual emulations. It was commented that Wu Bixia's singing voice is natural with pure soul; unique and attractive.

From the impression of the audience, it was complimented that Wu Bixia presented with her rich artistic expression and artistic appeal. She projected a clear and sweet voice; with excellent timbre and perfect singing skills. Through the understanding from Wu Bixia's own writing, it was stated that vocal conception and way of thinking of Chinese and foreign works sing, she expounded in three steps, they are the malleability of human singers, the invariable principle of singing, and the variable factors of singing. Her views have a positive influence on the current vocal music education. As she said, “I studied Western vocal music after long learning of Chinese National vocal music, and between 2003 and 2004 in China and Southeast Asia had organized many concerts. The purpose of organising solo concerts for Chinese and foreign works is not to treat singing as performance, my purpose is told music learner, do not the vocal method's slave, try to master variety singing style and let the singing return to nature.

The combination of Chinese and Western singing style is Wu Bixia's characteristics and musical identity. The overall development of music culture today is diversified, and the development of vocal music as part of the music culture is also true and vital. Communication and fusion of Chinese and Western vocal music culture has been a common concern in vocal music. As a China's outstanding young artists and singers, Wu Bixia can be regarded as a model for everyone. Her success was culminated in the integration of Chinese Nazionale cantanti and Western bel canto singing methods, and it was a unique singing method that develops the Chinese vocal pedagogy to a successful model. Zhao (2008) and Xiao (2010) stated that Wu Bixia exploration and contribution to national vocal music improves and completes the national singing more perfectly. Her selfless devotion to Chinese National singing leaves a brilliant touch in the history of Chinese National music.

## **2.9 Characteristics of Wu Bixia's singing style**

As a new and brilliant singer in today's Chinese vocal music in China, Wu Bixia has a vast experience on the aesthetic concept of vocal music. She combined the bel canto singing style with the folk singing, which achieved the confluence of the two singing styles. In terms of singing techniques, she inherited the traditional singing method of the Chinese folk song by using the rounded-singing style to strive the basis of accurate singing with her energy. Gradually, she successfully opened a new musical path.

Wu Bixia oppose this opinion that is antagonistic vocalization of Chinese National vocal music with Western vocal music, she advocates don not deliberately pursuing at any of the two methods; understanding the art works is the most important. Wu Bixia's Chinese vocal music features distinctive features and sounds. Her foreign works were mellow, fresh and smart. Wu Bixia focused and maintained on her personal

style on the basis of scientific vocalisation, for example, when she sang the works of Chinese folk songs such as Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye (春江花月夜) and ‘Long Chuan Diao’ (龙船调), she demonstrated well on the understanding the rhythm of Chinese folk culture and classical culture. In order to sing well on the foreign works such as ‘Violet’ and ‘Rigoletto’, she studied in Italy, France, Austria and other countries to construct her own vocal style. She sung the Russian folk song ‘Nightingale’ gorgeously, dexterously and lightly. She was able to sing the high-pitched area while grasping the melody and coherence (Chuang, 2016; Zhao, 2010).

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the historical integration between the Western Classical singing music and Chinese National vocal music; the characteristics and influence of Wu Bixia’s singing style. The review provides the background knowledge to identify the divergence in the literature, forming research questions and research objectives.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the synthesis of Western Classical singing method and Chinese vocal singing method, the influence of Wu Bixia's singing method, combining Western and Chinese singing method; and to examine the impact of Western Classical singing on the Chinese National vocal music.

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. What are the influences of Western Classical music singing method on Chinese National vocal music?
2. How does the integration of Western Classical music singing method and Chinese National Vocal music have an impact on the 21<sup>st</sup> century Chinese vocal pedagogy and performance?
3. What are the influences of Wu Bixia's singing method on Chinese National vocal music?

#### 3.2 Research method

This chapter presents a succinct description of the research methodology. The outline of this chapter is as follows: (1) research design; (2) sampling procedure; (3) data collection procedure; and (4) data analysis procedure.

### 3.2.1 Research design

The study employed qualitative research method to address the purpose of study. The resources and situation are explored through qualitative method. The qualitative research refers to collecting informative information in the form of open-ended question (Tesch, 1990). It provides an in-depth understanding of the responses and purposely designing in order to meet the research objectives.

Fischer (2006) described qualitative research as “reflective”, “interpretive”, and “descriptive” (p. xvi). He further elaborated that it is also require “reflexive effort” for description and the understanding of “human action and experience” (p. xvi). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) also described the characteristics of qualitative research as “interpretative” (p. 3) which the researchers attempt to “make sense of”, or to “interpret’ and make meaning from phenomena (p. 3). Bryman (1988) also shared the same notion that qualitative research is a way researchers’ study, understand and interpret the “social reality” (p. 8).

Chua (2012) emphasised that the importance of research design and method indicating that they determine the outcome of the research (p. 67). He further suggested that no one research design fits all research. Therefore, it is advisable for researcher to select best suited research design to address each particular research issue stipulated in the research objectives.

Flick (2007) maintained the notion that qualitative research was intended to understand, describe and phenomena in-depth and precisely in order to develop an identity of the research. He listed the approaches into 3 dimensions through analysing: (1) the experiences of individuals or groups; (2) the interactions and communication based on observing or recording the materials; (3) the documents, individual’s experiences or interaction.

Therefore, it is important to have a well-defined research concept and design at the onset of the research to navigate the process of research. Research design is a plan for collecting and analysing empirical evidence that will make it possible for the investigator to answer research questions intended. The design of a qualitative research is characterised as an investigation includes all aspects of the research; details of data collection and data analysis procedures. In this study, in-depth semi-structured interview was employed to collect qualitative data.

### **3.2.2 Interviews**

As stated by Jamshed (2014), interview is the most common data collection procedure in qualitative research and a common methodology in qualitative research (Mann, 2016). It is considered as the most “natural and socially acceptable way of collecting information” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 134). The advantage of interview is that in-depth insights and understandings can be drawn from the “participants experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic” (Turner, 2010, p. 754); and a good way to dwell and to know the participants’ “beliefs, experiences, and worlds” (Mann, 2016, p. 2).

Interview is an important approach as it is an adventure or exploration in learning about the ideas, individual’s experiences, cultural views, or even the problems and solutions, and observing or investigating on how the individual or groups practice the similarities and differences to present the unconventional identity (Siedman, 2006).

Eswaramoorthy and Zaarinpoush (2006) also indicated that interview is a tract of conversation to gather information and knowledge, which involves an interviewer who coordinating the process of conversation and communication with the interviewees as respondents to respond and act to those questions. It is a method that draws on the interaction between interviewer and interviewee to discover the viewpoints of the interviewee. According to Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012), the method of

interviewing is focussed on in-depth questioning the participant's perception and viewpoint, exploring the interest of the participants. Interview has the purpose on exploring the lived experience of someone through understanding and knowing the meaning behind of the person lived experience happening (Seidman, 2006).

Mann (2016) described face-to-face research interview as the "involvement of one interviewer and one interviewee" (p. 86). However, it is an unstable tool to observe the interviewer's facial expression and actions and to interpret the problem of the research. Mann (2016) proposed telephone interview as a more convenient tool for researchers when the interviewers are locating in different places or countries (p. 86). The face to face interview is more direct and characterized by synchronous communication in time and place (Mann, 2016, p. 86). The e-mail interview is characteristics as different in time and place.

In this research face to face and telephone interview are employed to collect qualitative data. Interview questions are generated to obtain participator perspectives related to the research question (Opdenakker, 2006).

### **3.2.2.1 Types of interviews**

According to Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012), there are four types of interviews: structured, semi-structure, informal, and retrospective. In this study, there are two types of interviews to undergo this research, which are in-depth interviewing and semi-structured interviewing.

In-depth interviewing involves conducting intensive interviews with a small amount of number of respondents to explore their perspectives on viewpoint, program or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Detailed information from the focus group and concerning participant's thoughts and behaviour is required in order to explore in-depth.

Semi-structured interviewing is a type of meeting that is informal questioning. It

is more casual and do not have particular form of sequence on questions. Indeed, it encourages two-way communication; both interviewer and the participant can ask questions. Thus, it is vital to have a plan on questioning in order to have a communication during the interview section (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

This study employed a semi-structured interviewing to have a more conducive situation with the participants in the process of interview. According to Mann (2016), he suggested semi-structured interviews are the good opt to provide a reassuring structure and at the same time no pressure on sticking the determined script (p. 91). Further, in semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is free to plan and organise the sequence of questions based on the responses from the participants.

### **3.3 Participants sampling**

The participants engaged in this research were 8 vocalists and vocal teachers (1 male and 7 female) from China with ages ranging from 27 to 35 years old. All the participants are professional singers currently active in vocal performance and teaching in China. There are 8 interviewers in total: 2 interviewees from Shen Yang Art School, China; 5 interviewees from Shen Yang Conservatory of Music (SYCM); and 1 from University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

Among 8 interviewees, there are 7 interviewees are lecturers, holding a doctorate professional while the rest are the students who possessed about 10 years and above of vocal experiences, and have a good understanding about the singing technique of Wu Bixia. They are all had study experiences at conservatory of music.

### **3.4 Sampling procedure**

Purposive sampling is chosen for this study. It is a non-probability sample which the population is selected based on the characteristics of population and the objective of the study (Battaglia, 2008). Battaglia (2008) mentioned that this type of sampling is accomplished by applying expert knowledge of the population to select in a non-random manner. As stated by Roulston (2010) researchers tend to seek to select the representative samples for their studies in order to findings to larger populations.

The interview was conducted between July 12, 2018 to August 20, 2018 and the criteria of selection included: (1) level of musical knowledge; (2) experiences in singing; (3) expertise in vocal performance; (4) expertise in vocal pedagogy. Their music education background is at least a graduate from professional music college.

### **3.5 Interview questions**

According to Siedman (2006), conducting an interview in the qualitative research is important to be tactful and sensitive. He further suggested few appropriate interviewing technique and interviewer etiquette and summarized some of the fundamentals of the techniques. Firstly, listening was emphasized; he indicated that an interviewer must always be prepared to listen on the participant at three different levels, that is listen to the “inner voice” of the participant, listen to the process and flow of the interview and always monitor the time passed and questions remaining. Secondly are the ways of asking the interview questions. He indicated that while questioning, it is important for the interviewer to follow up and to clarify, and to encourage participant to elaborate or share the information for more comprehensive understanding. Further, it is reminded to be respectful of boundaries, as it is essential in the process of interview to prevent uncomfortable feeling and feeling defensive on sharing. Thirdly, being wary of leading

questions; it is a preferable tactic for the interviewers to ask open-ended questions. It is critical for interview to know that interrupting the participants will make the participants feel disrespected and uncomfortable.

In order to design the interview questions for this research, reference was made to what was proposed by Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012). They suggested few types of interview questions, that is: (1) background or demographic; (2) knowledge; (3) experience; (4) opinion; and (5) sensory (p. 453). First, interview questions were designed on the characteristics of the background of the interviewees on age, qualifications, education background. Next, in order to collect the data based on the research, the factual knowledge questions relating to the objective of the research were formulated. Experience questions lead the participants giving their attention on their experience, behaviours and activities of the participants. Opinion questioning is the type of question that aiming to know about the viewpoints, beliefs and goals of the participants. Lastly is the sensory questioning that involving the five sensors of the participants: listening, seeing, tasting, smelling and touching.

For this study, interview questions were formulated based on categories 1 to 4, the background or demographic; knowledge; experience; and opinion of the participants.

### **3.6 Audio recording protocol**

Smart phone is a convenient tool for the purpose of audio recording. Thus, I Phone 7 plus is used as the recording tool for the interview as this smart phone has a good quality of voice recording. Particularly, the smart phone was used throughout as a recording tool for all the interviewing sessions with the interviewees in Shen Yang, China. Thus, audio recording through phone is a vital process in order to collect the complete information for reviewing purposes.

Mann (2016) has discussed about telephone interview, compare the face to face interview, telephone interview is appreciably dull, and it is not easy stir up the atmosphere of the party's conversation. The main problem is the lack of visual effects and body language.

With the advancement in science and technology, digital tools are more and more convenient to people's life, therefore, video call interviews through WeChat and Line were mainly used in collecting qualitative data for this study. Video call has great advantage as a tool for interview as both interviewer and interviewees are able to see each other "face-to-face" and observe each other's body language and facial expression. This is essential as it enables the interviewees to be more focused on the contents of the conversation and respond promptly to the questions.

### **3.7 Data collection procedure**

Data collection is a process of gathering and analysing the information that enabling answering the stated research questions. According to Dudovski (2018), other than collecting information that is relevant to the research problem, it is also a process to test the hypothesis and evaluate the outcomes. In this research, the qualitative data is collected through participants' interview. In this research, interview is the main process in collecting the data. The process of interview is depending on how the researcher works. The researcher should work on collecting the data to understand the major viewpoints of the research problems able to make differentiation to the interviewees' situation. Indeed, being a good listener as a primary condition in order to have a good process of interviewing.

In order to avoid the bias of the researcher, open-ended questions are advisable to use for approaching the questions from general to specific or sensitive topics in the process of interview. As stated by Roulston (2010), open-ended questions are asked in

particular sequences with sensitive topics approached in the interview after sufficient rapport has been developed between the interviewer and interviewee. All the process of interviewing is collected through audio recording in the smart phone for further reviewing and transcribing the data.

### **3.8 Data analysis procedure**

In the data analysis process, transcribing and coding the data as supporting data are vital after the interviewing process. The process of transcribing interviewing data is vital. According to Roulston (2010), the process of member checking of transcriptions and interpretations is vital in the process of transcribing the interviewing data in order to demonstrate that the research participants have developed an adequate understanding of the phenomenon investigated. There are several processes to work on the manuscripts: sending copies of the completed transcriptions to interviewees for editing and adding, asking interviewees to assess and add to the preliminary findings developed by the researcher in a follow-up meeting or interview, or providing copies of preliminary reports and manuscripts for the participants to comment on (Roulston, 2010).

The purpose of the strategies has its benefits for the researchers to conduct further fieldwork. Indeed, the process of re-listen to audio recording especially in the process of transcribing is valuable for the researcher in order to obtain more accurate information.

### **3.9 Data coding**

As stated by Roulston (2010), coding is defining as categorizing the data such as interview, transcripts, documents, or field notes by the researchers. In the process of the interviewing data, code is referring to the topics of talk developed by interviewer and

interviewee. The interviewing data will be transcribed and then start to use the code vocabulary in the process of analysing the transcription.

Clarke and Braun (2013) has discussed about thematic analysis and mentioning the coding according to the relative perspective. In their view, coding is the approaches to qualitative analytic process that capturing both semantic and conceptual reading of the data. It is also a process of searching for “evidence of identified themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2016, p. 4). It is vital for the researcher to code the data item and end this phase by collating all their codes and relevant data extract (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

After developing the codes, earlier transcriptions are checked to see if the emerging concepts are present. The analyst can assemble a list of preliminary codes which will be adjusted, summarised, and revised throughout the analytic process. Researchers minimise a data set to conceptual elements that can be sorted into category and theme.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter provides a succinct description of the methodology of this study. It included the research design, sampling procedure and data collection and analysis procedure.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews and the findings of the study to address the research questions of this study. The following are the research questions that guided this study:

1. What are the influences of Western Classical music singing method on Chinese National vocal music?
2. How does the integration of Western Classical music singing method and Chinese National vocal music have an impact on the 21<sup>st</sup> century Chinese vocal pedagogy and performance?
3. What are the influences of Wu Bixia's singing method on Chinese National vocal music?

This study employed semi-structured in-depth interview to investigate the synthesis of Western Classical singing method and Chinese vocal singing method; the influence of Wu Bixia's singing method, combining Western and Chinese singing method; and to examine the impact of Western Classical singing on the Chinese vocal singing on vocal pedagogy in 21<sup>st</sup> century China.

Longhurst (2003) indicated that semi-structured interview aims to elicit information from another person through asking questions, choosing the information that is important which focusing on this discussion. The participants in this study are professional singers currently active in vocal performance and teaching in China. The

selection of the participants was based on their music qualifications and professional experiences. The interviewees include lecturers who hold doctorate degree professional and doctoral students who have about 10 years and above of vocal experiences. There were eight interviewees in total, 2 interviewees from Shen Yang Art School, China; 5 interviewees from Shen Yang Conservatory of Music (SYCM); and 1 from University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. All interviewees indicated that they have good understanding of Wu Bixia's singing technique.

## **4.2 The influence of Western Classical music singing method on Chinese National vocal music**

The following discuss the influence of Western Classical singing method on Chinese National vocal music which includes: (1) historical context; (2) composing style; (3) vocal pedagogy; and (4) vocal health.

### **4.2.1 Historical context**

The vocal singing music began to develop rapidly in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Yu, 2010), until the emergence of opera in the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to Xu (2009), Western Classical singing music was introduced to China at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century where the Western vocal classical educators began to come to China to advocate the knowledge of Western Classical music singing. Additionally, at that time, there were many Chinese singers study abroad in Europe countries.

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century till the present represents the most significantly important historical period for the development of Chinese vocal music. Since the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western vocal music gradually develops and takes shape in China and merging with China vocal culture with historical context (Xu, 2009).

Through the interviews, the participants concurred that Chinese National vocal

music was much influenced by the Western Classical music singing method. From the narration of the interview, four participants highlighted the importance of historical context on the development of integrating Western Classical music singing method with Chinese National vocal technique.

The role of Western Classical vocal techniques and singing skills has been used as common performing practice in China since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Participant 1, an experienced vocal performer and teacher said that:

I totally agreed that the development of the Chinese National vocal music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is attributed to the Western Classical singing method.

She further explained that:

... before the 20th century, there was no systematic pedagogic method for the singing of Chinese folk song until the May 4th movement in 1919.

In 1919, the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement, a cultural and political movement has evoked anti-traditional views that shaped China's culture from then. The Chinese singers at that time discovered, experienced and experimented along the European bel canto. They were enthusiastic with the European vocal music aesthetics.

Participant 1 reminiscence the significant pioneer representatives that profoundly contributed to the development of Chinese vocal singing at that time:

... singers, for example Xiaoyan Zhou (周小燕), Li Shuangjiang (李双江), Jin Tielin (金铁霖)... they were excellent Chinese vocal artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

She indicated that these Chinese artists learned and studied the European bel canto singing method and made the reformation to strive for brilliant achievement in vocal music and voice research. Participant 2 highlighted that:

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the forerunners in the Chinese vocal music put in a lot of effort and were aspired to explore and study the European vocal art. They then enthusiastically applied the newly learned method and technique into the performance and pedagogic disciplines.

Participant 2 further described the contributions of these musical and educational predecessors:

They developed pedagogical knowledge of vocal music in the classroom and transferred the idea of vocal technique and method in their regular lessons, and introduced the knowledge of European art of classical vocal music and opera to the Chinese people at that time.

Participant 2 also stated that:

Besides, during this period there were some professional music groups; the bourgeois intellectuals, absorbed and learned the context of singing method from Western singing music with the combination of the Chinese National vocal music, and created a series of art songs, such as: Qing Zhu's (周青) 'Wo Zhu Chang Jiang Tou' (我住长江头); Nie Eer's (聂耳) 'Tie Ti Xia De Ge Nv' (铁蹄下的歌女); and Huang Zi's (黄自) 'Mei Gui San Yuan' (玫瑰三愿) ...and so on.

She further elaborated their contributions:

Today, these songs have become familiar art songs among the Chinese vocalists. Since then, these collective works were edited as textbooks for the Chinese music colleges and also structured into the curriculum as vocal learning exercises. They are valuable pedagogic materials for novice vocal students and as new repertoire for vocal practice.

Additionally, another participant, who is a vocal performer and teacher, explained that since the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement in 1919, Chinese National vocal music has begun to evolve rapidly. He recalled and reminiscence of that time and commented:

I reckon that one of the most artistic representative works is 'Song Bie' (送别), composed by the famous music educator, Mr Li Shutong (李叔同) during the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement. Until this day 'Song Bie' is still been included as the examination repertoire for music colleges and universities.

Further, he clarified the reasoning of his choice of selecting 'Song Bie':

This song has its own characteristic artistic values. Firstly, it used Chinese Classical poetry in the lyric. Secondly, it is a reworking from Western composition where the composer adapted from Western music, John Pond Odway's Dream of home and mother. This combination of Chinese and Western was a bold and innovative effort at that time, but it also paved the way of artistic achievement in the future.

Participant 3 continued to elaborate the historical setting of combining the Western Classical music singing with Chinese National vocal music. He commented that:

‘Shi Jing’, also known as The Classic of Poetry, is the earliest anthology of Chinese poetry compiled from the Western Zhou to the Spring and Autumn period.

Based on elite artistic pursuit, he described the ancient’s music pedagogy and emphasised that:

I once watched a documentary about the music education in the Western Zhou period, teacher was really stern with their pupils, but, they created many valuable musical compositions; and were preserved and passed down for generations. Until present day, their educational and vocal theories are still being appreciated and valued. These processes had indirectly influenced the future generations in the fundamental vocal development.

He also narrated that:

The existing historical works indicated that the earliest history of the integration of Western-Chinese vocal music can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty, despite the different perceptions of the historical materials.

In 1898, Reforms Movement established a Western-Chinese school advocating the learning from the West, promoting science and refinement, and opening vocal classes. New music movement in China was aroused as Western culture music entered China. Hence, China commenced on the understanding of the art of bel canto from the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement in 1919 (Fan, 2015).

In sum, historically, the Chinese National vocal music was influenced by the Chinese traditional singing and the Western vocal singing. It assimilates the quintessence of the Western traditional singing method, and to make the Chinese National vocal singing have a place in the world of performing arts. Nowadays, the Chinese National vocal music is characterised by both national lasting charm and scientific method of expression (Hu, 2009).

#### **4.2.2 Composing style**

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western vocal music was introduced into China, which has had a strong impact on Chinese National vocal music. Western art culture and

thought quickly influenced the traditional national vocal music. The influences include singing methods, pronunciation skills, musical creativity, and composing style in modern national vocal music. The ubiquitous and pervasive influence of Western vocal music is evidenced in the modern of Chinese National vocal music (Xu, 2009).

From the narration of the interviews, two participants have highlighted their opinions in the composing style of this influence. Participant 3 recalled that:

There is a song, I absolutely loved it; the art song “I Love You, China”, a film episode in the Chinese film “Overseas Boys” filmed in 1979. It is not just an ordinary song, though the lyrics are in Chinese language, but was composed in the bel canto singing style. This song was known as the “Excellent Songs of the Masses” in 1980. Since then, many Chinese National songs have assimilated the bel canto style which gradually increased its popularity.

The art song “I Love You, China” (我爱你中国) has a unique artistic style, cultural connotation, aesthetic characteristics, unique aesthetics features and aesthetic value of art songs (Yun, 2015).

Participant 4 commented on the compositional intent:

Most of the Chinese National vocal music was composed in praise of the motherland and also as encouragement of the heroic deeds.

Participant 4 further elaborated the development of music creativity at that time:

However, from the perspective of creativity, there are new attempts and breakthroughs. For example, using Western compositional structures in the Chinese National vocal music arts work, but all the national vocal arts songs innovations are based on the preservation of the original style and carry out different levels of change and development.

In sum, the musical artists at the early 20<sup>th</sup> century embraced the influence of Western musical styles and its amalgamation with Chinese National vocal music.

#### **4.2.3 Vocal pedagogy**

The traditional Chinese folk singing method focus mainly on diction and lyrical expression. Further, the vocal singing method also emphasised a relaxed and natural

singing manner. Oral communication is considered as part of the training for the purpose of promoting vocal drills. In contrast, bel canto's technique has a penetrating power to create a thick vocalisation which able to influence the phonation indirectly by controlling the depth of breathing.

According to the feedbacks from the participants, bel canto, Chinese National vocal and pop music singing is the three most important singing methods in China. Most of the music departments conduct these three singing courses in their core curriculum. It is the blueprint of the vocal music teaching in China.

Some participants indicated that they employ both the European and Chinese teaching methods in their vocal teaching. They stated that both methods are almost the same which based on the scientific method of sound and expression. Although the Western vocal singing method is supposedly considered perfect, but some participants indicated that it relies too much on resonance. However, the participants all agreed that the Western vocal singing method has its benefits in establishing the foundation of vocalisation.

For instance, Participant 4 expressed that:

When students study the Chinese National singing, they can use the bel canto method as the basis of foundation first, and then proceed to professional national singing training. The method is also very efficient and meaningful in vocal teaching.

Participant 5 explained that every musical style has its own cultural features.

He emphasised that:

If you want to sing well in each of the style, you must study in depth, understand it, and make comparisons with other vocal works. You can't assume which method is correct or wrong.

Participant 5, another vocal teacher stated that, as far as bel canto singing style and Chinese National vocal music are concerned, there are important steps to perfect and refining the Chinese National vocal music teaching system and to structure the pedagogic instructions using bel canto method. She reminiscence of her school days and described that:

My major in the music college is bel canto singing, but I also attended the classes for Chinese National vocal music. Most of the teaching methods of the vocal class are rigorous, fixed, and unchanging, and must respect the scientific theory.

She further elaborated the vocal teaching methods in her personal professional music learning:

The classroom teaching is grounded with the scientific theory of the vocal singing method. Established on the characteristics of each student's voice, the method is applied with flexibility. I will also practice national vocal music by myself, and to discover the common ground and different points. It was an interesting learning process, considering practicing the same vocal works with two singing style, that is vocal and folk... you will find music fun in it. I personally don't advocate defining and classifying students' vocal features and characteristics too early. It is not important whether you should sing bel canto or Chinese National vocal music. It is important to learn fundamental techniques first.

Participant 5 also reminiscences her first vocal classes 20 years ago, and expressed that:

When I went for the first vocal classes 20 years ago, my vocal teacher was teaching Chinese National vocal singing. Under her tutelage and influence, I invariably believed that my voice condition was suitable for singing national singing... not until I went to music university, then I realised that she just got in touch with the bel canto at that time. In her exploration, she subsequently became an outstanding pedagogue of bel canto vocal music. This reasoned the fact that the scientific theory of bel canto can be utilised as the basis of vocal music teaching.

Participant 7 stated that a singer with true aesthetic qualities must acquire professional knowledge and understand both Chinese National vocal music and bel canto. She accepted two methods of singing and commented that:

I also study and research on the Chinese vocal music by myself when I was at university. I think it is not good to assign or stubbornly entangled singing skills at the beginning of the vocal music study. And I still not find any teacher who can teach the both of bel canto and Chinese National vocal music. It is also a really interesting phenomenon that Chinese National vocal music instructors are able to teach bel canto as well.

However, Participant 6 has a different view from other participants, and explained that:

Even those who learn bel canto from the beginning, if they learn Chinese National vocal music in the later period, they are also able to sing perfectly the Chinese National vocal music.

And she believed that:

Every singing method is interlinked. This is related to the function of the human body. Although in some aspects, there are big differences between the Chinese and Western singing methods, one's singing mechanism can definitely have enough capacity to suit them.

According to Participant 8, for many years in China vocal education, the bel canto and the Chinese National singing have been situated in two opposing concepts but not contradicting to each other. He gave his opinion as:

I think instructor in vocal music training should have a deep self-knowledge from music literacy, artistic and aesthetics concepts to instruct and educate student, especially the youngsters and the students who are just novice vocalists.

The section above presented the data analysis of the emerging influencing factors related to the historical context of vocal style development in China and its influence by the Western Classical music singing.

#### **4.2.4 Vocal health**

The contents of early Chinese folk vocal music were derived from the ritual aspects which are closely related to people's daily life and work songs to co-ordinate the labour of people working together. With the rise of poetry in the "Tang dynasty" and "Song dynasty", it has accelerated the development of Chinese folk music vocal music to its new height. Furthermore, due to the singing methods which were quite acceptable, simple and usual, the development of Chinese National vocal music had a potent influence on the general population. Nevertheless, there were lacking the knowledge of human physiology and physiological functions in the process of training the Chinese National vocal music. Hence, in terms of vocal technique, there was a restriction in the early Chinese National vocal music.

Yang (2015) stated that, when Chinese National vocal music using bel canto as singing style, breath, resonance and other vocal skills can be adjusted through the use of

jaw, muscle of tongue root, neck, shoulders, strength of the waist and abdomen and other aspects. It resolves the problems in Chinese National vocal music when singing with sharp and high voice in the sound area, in which plays a role in protecting and maintaining the vocal cords.

From the interview, there were four participants who commented about the vocal health in singing Chinese National vocal song. Participant 1 commented that:

Most of the traditional Chinese folk singing methods focus on language diction and paying more attention to the lyrics expressed. In the training, where also considered part of training of oral communication is to promote vocal drills... thus, in the high-pitched area you will notice the lack of sound, sharp, but not sonorous.

Participant 1 continued to compliment the benefits of using bel canto vocal technique in promoting vocal health:

But from the learning of bel canto's method... it makes up for this deficiency, because the vocal singing method is about a relaxed natural singing state. Therefore, bel canto's vocalisation reduces the Chinese National singing which stresses the throat and the vocal cords when phonation.

Participant 2 has the same view with Participant 1, he described that:

The traditional national vocal music pursues the use the true voice in singing undertone excessively. It is not good for the health of the vocal cords in which it often overloads the throat and of a poor effect.

From the discussion above, it can be summarised briefly that though there are differences in bel canto and national vocal music, however, both singing styles can be integrated effectively. As stated by Ding (2017), the combination is realised through maintaining the "simple and honest characteristics of bel canto and the clear pronunciation of national vocal signing" (p. 233).

The section above presented the findings of the influence of Western Classical music singing method on Chinese National vocal music which includes the discussion on the historical context, composing style, vocal pedagogy, and vocal health. The

findings indicated that the combination and application of Italian bel canto is well accepted in the “nationalisation of bel canto” (Ding, 2017, p. 234).

The next section presents the participants’ views on the advantages of Western Classical vocal method on Chinese National vocal music.

### **4.3 The advantages of Western Classical Music singing method on Chinese National Vocal music.**

The following discuss the advantages of Western Classical music singing method on Chinese National vocal music which included: (1) vocal music technique; (2) the characteristics of the Chinese National vocal music; (3) the characteristics of bel canto singing style; (4) the integration of two vocal arts; and (5) significance of two singing style integration.

#### **4.3.1 Vocal music technique**

Basing on the analysis of the interview, this section of vocal music technique was classified into four themes; they are categorised as breathing methods, vocalisation training, and pronunciation of vocal music and use of cavity resonance respectively.

From the narration of the interview, the participants discussed the similarities and differences between the Chinese National vocal music technique and bel canto. There were six participants who discussed succinctly the breathing patterns in both types of vocal singing.

##### **4.3.1.1 Breathing methods**

According to the perceptions of the participants, they indicated that the bel canto method and the Chinese National vocal music though there are differences, but they are not entirely different. As stated by Participant 1:

They all emphasised the breathing, as it is the soul of singing. Chinese National vocal music always put emphasis on breathing into your belly. As for bel canto singing, it is mainly through the enlargement of the chest and abdomen and makes the breath deeper and steadier... although the theory is different, but the principles and methods are the same.

Participant 2 also have a concurring view and agreed that:

Bel canto and Chinese National singing all regard breathing as the prime importance of singing. Both emphasise deep breathing in the breathing methods and regard this as strict requirements for the voice of the singer, rely on breath to support voice, and to achieve clean and pure timbre.

Chinese National vocal music and bel canto are two parallel singing arts, with the same theoretical rules in sound production. Although there are differences, such as history, culture and singing skills (Wang, 2010), proper breathing patterns are most vital in both types of singing styles.

Participant 3 commented on breathing problem in Chinese National vocal music and stated that though placed importance on breathing but there are not any theoretical rules precisely. Suggestions were made for improvements in the national singing style through studying the essence of bel canto singing style:

I think the Chinese National vocal music is not sufficiently rigorous in the control and depth of breathing. However, learning from bel canto's vocal skills remedies this deficiency. Hence, the Chinese National vocal music also can have enough penetrating power to create a strong voice.

Both Participants 4 and 7 have similar views. They identified that the breath support is the basis of sound production in singing. Participant 4 explained the impact of bel canto breathing method on the Chinese National vocal music in China vocal pedagogy:

I have studied the Chinese National singing for more than 15 years. When I was young, my first vocal teacher taught me on controlling larynx and the vibration of vocal cords. I started to master the breathing training skill when I went further study in the music university, the Western bel canto, also defined as diaphragm breathing method. The aim of this skill is to train on focusing voice through breathing-by using the diaphragm power pushing the breath and relaxing the vocal cord.

Participant 7 expressed that:

Both singing style have their strict requirements for breathing, especially Chinese National vocal music, it requires Dantian (丹田), the lower abdomen to breathe, while bel canto advocates flexible search for respiratory supporting points. As long as it is smooth enough to breathe, I think that the sound of bel canto breathing methods is more conducive to apply to other singing skills.

Participant 8, an experienced vocal performer and teacher said that:

My students always ask me about what the best way of breathing is, I don't want follow the rules for others, now I told my students, which method can make you keep deep breath and feel comfortable, that is the best way of breathing... but the precondition is that should have a correct understanding of breathing. so I told my students a scientific way of breathing is the very basis of singing.

He also stated that :

Chinese National vocal music more pay attention to articulation of feelings, for the breathing training less than bel canto, that is lead to Chinese National vocal music breathing have bad stability. However, learning breathing control method from bel canto can makes up for this deficiency.

From the views of the participants, it can be summarised that the application of bel canto technique can further enhance and improve the artistry in Chinese National vocal music

#### **4.3.1.2 Vocalisation training**

There are three participants who highlighted the advantage of bel canto's style of vocalisation training. According to Participant 2, he commented that:

Bel canto's singing method require the throat must be totally open, even reached the bottom of the throat, now Chinese National singing method learn from bel canto's vocalisation skills also requires the relaxation of the throat, jaw and larynx.

Participant 3 also stated that :

Most of the traditional Chinese folk singing methods focus on language diction, and more pay attention to the lyrics expressed, training where also considered part of training of oral communication to promote vocal drill, thus in the high-pitched area you will notice the lack of sound, sharp, not sonorous, but learn from bel canto's use of

mixed vocal register in the singing method makes up for this deficiency, because the vocal singing method is about a relaxed natural singing state, so bel canto's vocalisation skills reduces the Chinese National singing influence on the throat and the vocal cords in phonation.

Participant 1 mentioned that significance of standing posture with vocalisation, she commented that:

Good standing posture is the premise of singing, standing posture should be the posture of the body is relaxed and keep natural, do not raise your shoulders, and eyes keep straight ahead. This standing position can keep the cavity easy and smooth.

According to the participants, Chinese National singing method ponders on the language, the expression of the language and mood and the vocal drill on high-pitched. In contrast, bel canto singing style focuses on the details of voicing, appropriate control of the air through the vocal cords.

#### **4.3.1.3 Pronunciation skills of vocal music**

Participant 7 explained the pronunciation problem of the Chinese National vocal music.

She commented that:

My personal view is that this is due to the language problem; bel canto's singing method is not complicated as the Chinese folk singing. And bel canto singing is mostly Italian., there are only five vowels are A, E, I, O, U, then the pronunciation features of Chinese national vocal music integration with the bel canto singing technique, its pronunciation method is more using the back teeth, jaw and the lower jaw need fully open. I personally believe that this method of pronunciation makes the sound unclear, but if the pronunciation features of Chinese national vocal music combine with the vocal technique of the bel canto, the portrait pronounce is converted into landscape pronounce. The singing of the pronunciation and articulation' position unification, the voice districts also unify.

Participant 8 also have a concurring view, He expressed that:

The earliest traditional Chinese folk singing voice is more real, no ornament, almost using real voice, hence if the artwork singing degree of difficulty was very high, as we know human's vocal cord is limited, then it is difficult to perfectly convey the song content and emotion, but nowadays it is different, Chinese national vocal music after learning the singing method of bel canto, the Chinese national vocal music has been liberated in pronounce and resonating, making the works more appealing, and the voice and emotions have been maximized.

In summary, bel canto singing style is simpler and less complex as compared to the Chinese national vocal style as the pronunciation method compiles with only five vowels which are quite straightforward. In contrast to the Chinese national vocal music, it is more complicated due to the combination of the vowels which liberating the pronouncing and resonating the words more emotionally.

#### **4.3.1.4 Cavity resonance**

Participant 1 indicated that the characteristic of Chinese National vocal music is influenced by the nationalistic culture and heritage but lesser of the bel canto's style.

And she commented that:

Chinese National vocal music resonance and vocalisation are totally dissimilar from those of the Western bel canto. The Chinese National vocal music too traditional, it was heritage from ancient, bel canto's method is more scientific; bel canto is particularly about the resonating cavity. It requires the singer to fully open the resonant cavity when singing, so as to reach the sound smooth and make a good resonance environment for the voice.

Participant 3 concurred and explained that;

The bel canto requires that the vibrancy of each voicing cavity is responsive and cooperative. The Chinese National vocal music we experience now in China the method more focused on the resonance of the brain and cranial cavity, with brighter timbre and higher vocal position. Prominent is a way start to read language from the mouth.

There are two participants who discussed the vocal skills of resonance. Both Participants 4 and 6 analysed the bel canto's resonance of the three chamber accommodations, include head resonance, the oral resonance and the chest resonance. They indicated that the use of sympathetic resonance must be connecting the three resonances into a whole which cannot use any of the resonances separately.

Why does the Western bel canto emphasise on sympathetic resonance or vibration? I personally believe their language vowels are the main reason. However, the Chinese language more emphasis on the effect of oral articulation, instead of emphasising use of cavity. This also explained why the Chinese National vocal music pays more care to head resonance. In sum, bel canto emphasised on resonating cavity when singing while Chinese National vocal focus on the articulation of the Chinese language.

#### 4.3.1.5 The characteristics of Chinese National vocal music and bel canto

The bel canto represents the vocal singing method and vocal aesthetics originated from the 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy. National vocal music is regarded as the “treasure of Chinese traditional culture” combining varied singing styles from diverse ethnic groups (Ding, 2017, p. 232).

The following discuss the findings of the comparisons between the characteristics of Chinese National vocal music and bel canto. Participant 2 stated that:

My personal view, the Chinese National vocal music most prominent characteristic is emotional and charm.

Participant 3 also commented that:

Chinese national vocal music voice is sweet, resounding and bright, National vocal music it has strong oriental characteristics.

Participant 4 have different view with the characteristics of Chinese National vocal music. He expressed that:

When the Chinese people singing, their habit is using lip read the lyrics until the breath flow into the nasal cavity. Although this method is conformed the characteristics of Chinese language but when it is voiced, the vibrancy of the pharyngeal cavity and the chest cavity is also rarely used, so that the voice does not sound smooth enough, the sound not full bodied.

Participant 5 expressed that Chinese National vocal music characteristic it is has diversified singing style; even some areas of the song are sung in dialects, such as Long Chuandiao (龙船调) which used the dialects of Si Chuan in China. Further, the characteristics of Chinese National vocal music are significantly in relation to the geographical characteristics.

Chinese National singing method is a combination of singing elements of many other nationalities and learned from the theoretical rules of vocal music method in the West. The knowledge is further combined with various characteristic of Chinese

National vocal music to shape to a more scientific method which characterised the Chinese National vocal system (Su, 2012).

Participant 2 also stated the characteristic of Western bel canto that:

The bel canto is characterised by round and sonorous quality of the chest voice. As the bel canto has its own history of over 300 years, it has its own singing skills hybrid with scientific system theory. There are significant factors that influence and support the development of Western Classical music singing that has been recognised by the world in the musical performance practice, which enhance the art of singing.

Participant 3 remarked that:

Bel canto the biggest characteristic is the use of mixed vocal register, it means the true and false tone are assigned according to the pitch ratio, utilising the cavity resonance and making the body a musical instrument.

Participant 5 commented that :

Bel canto the characteristic is wide range, nice timbre and uniform tone quality, smooth breath and sound continuity, full use of the human body's cavity resonance like abdominal resonance, chest resonance, throat and pharyngeal resonance, oropharyngeal resonance, nasopharyngeal resonance, oral resonance, nasal resonance and head cavity resonance.

Bel canto originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy and considered as a cultural ideology of the mankind, which constructs the charisma of this vocal style and following a significant impact and influence on Chinese National vocal music (Li, 2012).

#### **4.3.1.6 Integration of two vocal arts**

From the perspectives of the present day, the integration of Western Classical music singing into Chinese National vocal music singing is not a new phenomenon in China.

From the early decades in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Chinese composers and singers have studied abroad in the West, and there were also many foreign musicians living in China, for example, Russian pianist and music educator 'Zaharov', pianist Louise Verdi, musician 'Freres Kerr' and many other eminent names. During their years in

China, they cultivated many promising and famous performers in China and contribute significantly to music pedagogy creative industries in modern China.

From the audience's perspectives, the participants generally have a positive response and perceptions with the integration of Western Classical singing music and Chinese National vocal singing techniques. They indicated that this integration has a good impact on the Chinese vocal pedagogy and the vocal health of the singers.

Participant 1 stated that from the macro point of view, Chinese National vocal music learning from the integration of scientific method of Western Classical singing music is inevitable trend for the Chinese music development. She commented about the developmental process of the Chinese National vocal music:

Chinese National vocal music learned from the Western Classical methods, learning from each other, in teaching pedagogy and singing technique, as well as the creation of works of art are all good influences on Chinese National vocal music.

Participant 4 expressed that:

The Chinese national singing method also suffers from its own unique vocal characteristics, and the fusion with the bel canto's method also makes it have the characteristics of soft voices and make each area orotund and opposite to unify.

According to the participants, they all agreed that the integration of Chinese and Western methods is not only acknowledged and embraced by professional in the vocal arts, but also treasured by the general audience in the aesthetics appreciation of songs.

In addition, Participant 8 stated the application of bel canto singing method enable a refinement in the artistry of Chinese National vocal music with improved and enriched vocal techniques and controlled musical expression. He gave an example and explained that:

I take an example; a song name is "Mei Niang Qu" (梅娘曲). It is textbook song when we in the school. This song is about that "Mei Niang" could not restrain her painful mood when she returned to her motherland from Nan Yang, after she learned that lover and been wounded in the battlefield. If I used Chinese National vocal method to singing, to tone is to bright and high pitch it could not be fully express sad emotions, but only need merely with the resonance of the chest, make the sound stronger and longer, in parliamentary procedure to better convey the painful feel however, the first

two words 'Ge ge ni wang le wo'(哥哥你别忘了我) the voice can't be overly thick, should be hopeful and kindly, this song I hold heard the Chinese National version and the bel canto version, than I found that this song utilizes combination of bel canto's method and Chinese National music method is better express abundant song emotions.

He also stated that:

As a Chinese vocal educator we also want Chinese folk vocal works to receive world attention.

However, Participant 7 also shared different viewpoints from the other participants. She shared her opposing views and commented that:

I think we can learn from the bel canto's advantage, but we can't concentrate on it, because after all, we still want to maintain our unique singing system (Chinese National vocal music). If we just adore and imitate the bel canto singing method, we will lose the significance of our national singing.

Participant 2 and 5 also in support of Participant 7 and give some different opinion opposed to what Participant 2 have stated about vocal art aesthetics:

I agreed that in general, the scientific theory of bel canto can be utilised and served as the groundwork and foundation of our vocal music. However, it must not affect the aesthetics development of our folk music. The Chinese folk singing focuses on its national characteristics, but nowadays students can't sing the essence and charm of Chinese folk singing. It is also linked to China's overall educational environment. It is a lack of Chinese traditional culture education.

Participant 2 has shown many concerns on the integration of the Western bel canto in the expense of neglecting and under valuing the development of Chinese performing arts and cultural inheritance.

Participant 2 strongly advocated that while learning and making advantages of the Western vocal techniques, it is utmost importance to sustain the Chinese cultural connotations and maintain the characteristics national styles.

Participant 5 gave some advices for Chinese vocal students. He emphasised that:

In the present, Chinese vocal students should read the literature about traditional Chinese folk singing to understand and acquire knowledge of Beijing opera, local opera, folk tune, learning to understand the traditional cultivation of your Country and be rich in music culture. On this basis, you should pay attention to the ascendancy of the breath and the use of resonance, and then infer the characteristics of Chinese National vocal music, the conversion of breathing, avoiding Too many true sounds hurt the vocal cords,

using the correct scientific and saves energy method is the signification of the fusion of teaching.

From the discussion above, the findings indicated that there are many advantages in integrating the Chinese National vocal music and bel canto. However, some participants also shared concerns and advocated the importance and significance of preserving the characteristics features of Chinese vocal styles.

According the participants, there are many excellent singers in China whom have learned from the Western style vocal singing and embodied the skills in combining with Chinese singing and bring forth good result vocal professionals include Dai Yuqiang (戴玉强), Song Zuying (宋祖英), Yan Weiwen (阎维文), Wu Bixia (吴碧霞) and many others.

This study specifically takes Wu Bixia as a subject for case study, as many participants had explored her philosophy and pedagogy of both Chinese and Western singing styles.

The participants exemplified that Wu Bixia teaching philosophy is noteworthy to study, specifically her teaching methods in singing different styles of Chinese and foreign works. They acclaimed Wu Bixia as the representative figure in the perspective of “cross-border” style.

#### **4.4 The charm of Wu Bixia’s singing**

The following summarised the contributions and qualities of Wu Bixia’s singing. In 2006, Wu Bixia represented China, visiting scholar in the United States Juilliard School and the University to continue her vocal studying with Professor Ma Lianna Malas and Professor Carmen. She had on four international awards in her career at that time and yet she decided to further her study in abroad. Her two years of foreign learning experience lead her more confidence in her vocal singing.

In 2008, when Wu Bixia returned to her homeland she organised her personal concerts, a National Grand Theatre, to showcase her learning outcomes from the foreign lands. She insisted that as a Chinese learner learning Western vocal singing was rather hard; she tends to give off her previous learning and began to read and explore novel methods of singing. She is really appreciating her Madeline's teacher, Professor Carmen, who directed and led her to extend to a higher level. In the elevated process, she achieved good achievement by applying her new method, the integration of Chinese-Western singing and natural process to construct her singing identity, which earned her an eminent name. It was a discovery process for her to acquire knowledge in the sounds of singing the linguistic process, style and taste of the audiences.

#### **4.4.1 Wu Bixia's influence on the 21<sup>st</sup> century vocal scholars in China**

Although vocal skills are most important in vocal music, Wu Bixia emphasised that the challenges in vocal skills is not only about practice vocalisation, but it is also about knowledge of the culture and national heritage. According to Participant 2:

Her concept has had a profound impact on me, and I realise that I can't train my body as an instrument, but to value-added to the refinement and emotion, no matter bel canto or national vocal music, both emphasise the sound science and resonance cavity.

Another Participant 5 commented that Wu Bixia used singing methods to expand the pharyngeal cavity and oral volume in the vocal performances of Chinese and Western vocal works. For instance, in the interpretation of the Western opera puppet song, selected from the opera "Hoffman's story", reflected her fully understanding and interpretation, sound and rich, treble sweet mellow, glittery and spirited. She also explained that Wu Bixia singing was a pure fusion of oriental and western features, and it was very sophisticated in pronunciation.

As stated by Participant 6:

I have a certain understanding of Wu Bixia on vocal music, Wu Bixia is the first person in China to combine Chinese folk singing with Western bel canto is and gets

international accolades. Before Wu Bixia, there were many singers doing research in this field, the unification of the two singing methods, only she successful. It is feasible to earn some achievements for everyone to tell everyone and those who are engaged in the vocal music industry. This form of singing is internationally known. Not simply our personal opinions.

Participant 6 also further explained that:

Her artistic charm is that from the perspective of vocal music, she knows the factors of Chinese National vocal music, while the works of singing national vocal music in China are biased towards the vocal characteristics of melody, so she makes a big contrast, impact, gives the impression that the traditional more modern, modern and more traditional.

From the interview, according to most participants, the most impressive characteristic of Wu Bixia is in her diverse singing style and the fusion of music and culture. Either China singing style or the Western singing style, she sings in her own way with her own personal characteristics, using voice to bring spiritual resonance to the audiences of different lands.

Participant 3 explicated her view on Wu Bixia's art of singing and provided a positive opinion,

My understanding of her is that she devoted her life just for singing. Her mastery in the Chinese National vocal music, dramatic music, and Western bel canto is unrivalled. She combines Chinese and Western vocals in the exploration of vocal music and finds their similarities. She also knows how to strictly grasp the features of Chinese National vocal music, we can see from her tone and delicate singing, she also knew how to strictly grasp the characteristics of the bel canto. Her high-pitched voice, comfortable and explosive, and her weak sound have strong control. The mixed voice register was maintained as supreme quality.

According to Participant 1, she studied vocal music from Wu Bixia's online teaching video. She expressed that:

She never divides the boundaries between Western Classical music singing style and Chinese National singing style. She only divides it from the language.

She further remarked that:

From the name of her concert, when she sings Chinese art songs, the concert is called a concert of Chinese art works. If she sings a foreign vocal art works it called a foreign artwork concert, it will not be deliberately called a Chinese National vocal concert or Western bel canto. Therefore, I think this too indicates that her singing attitude is not

giving way to entangle in the singing mode, to divide the singing. No matter what mode of Chinese works she sings, she is based along the sound of science, and then her emotions are shown through her own discernment of the deeds.

In general, most participants commented that Wu Bixia's singing style allows the Chinese to appreciate the charm of Western songs, and also allows foreigners to enjoy the exotic flavour of Chinese songs.

It was indicated that the Chinese tradition vocal method has its limitation and is not conducive for vocal health. There were three participants in the study who indicated that the influence of Wu Bixia's method has directed the development of Chinese National vocal music progressed in diverse dimensions. The participants also observed the progress and stated that the Chinese traditional vocal music in the recent years had been incorporating the essence of bel canto technique into their teaching and performance.

From the interviews, all eight participants gave the individual perspectives on Wu Bixia's singing method. It can be concluded that Wu Bixia had her impact on the Chinese National singing method, integrating the Western vocal methods which emphasised on the breathing patterns which is important for the control of the sound production and vocal efficacy.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Based on the findings from the interviews of the eight Chinese vocal expertise; it can be concluded that there are advantages in the application of bel canto vocal techniques on Chinese National vocal music. However, the participants also advise the Chinese singer to adhere the essence of Chinese National vocal music; to have a deeper knowledge of the cultural background, to make great efforts in sustaining cultural heritage in vocal singing, and to maintain vivid vitality in the artistry of Chinese the national vocal music for the future.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1 Overview

This chapter concludes the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing data consists of the summary of the results, discussion of findings and the conclusion of the study. The data of the study are presented as follows: (1) history context of Chinese National vocal music and Western Classical music singing; (2) advantage of Western Classical music singing method on the Chinese National vocal music; (3) composing style of Western Classical singing music and Chinese National vocal music; (4) influences of Western Classical music singing method on Chinese National vocal music; (5) vocal technique; and (6) music aesthetic.

In this study, interview as a qualitative research was used as methodology: face to face and telephone interview semi-structure in-depth interview were conducted. This study focuses on investigating the synthesis of Western Classical singing method and Chinese vocal singing method.

#### 5.2 Summary of the results

The following presents the summary of the findings. In this study, history context is highlight of Western Classical music singing and Chinese National vocal music; Chinese National singing and Western Classical singing music singing both experienced a long historical period. Under different historical backgrounds and complex factors, gradually formed an artistic style system and singing method. From the data, Western music culture into the history of China can be traced to the Tang Dynasty. In the Tang Dynasty western hymns into China, until Yuan Dynasty, Catholic missionaries

contributed the piano and other western instruments to the emperor. These activities show that Western music culture has begun to spread in China (Liao, 2008).

In this study, based on Wu Bixia's singing style, it can be concluded that her phonation method is the foundation of bel canto. She sang the art works in different styles through changing the timbre by using the cavity and breathing techniques. In this study, timbre, breath, and vocal skills are skilfully combining the styles. Certainly, it has revealed the development of the contemporary of national vocal singing styles and vocal education in China, cultivating the diversity of singing style of Chinese National vocal music. The singing of Chinese and Western combine styles is applied to the teaching concept, which can help students to clarify their singing ideas, basic elements of singing is not only limited to singing skills, Everyone has their own singing style in themselves ,farewell sameness singing style is combine Chinese and Western main contents.

The teaching of Chinese National vocal music today's should be diversified. Wu Bixia is a successful case. Educators should try a variety of teaching methods in the practice of vocal music teaching to cultivate more vocal talents for Chinese vocal music (Bai, 2004).

The study analysed two types of singing styles, the Chinese National vocal and bel canto, in order to fill the knowledge gap. According to the participants, bel canto singing style revealing on the Chinese National vocal, in which stressing on the thick and strong, more delicate and brighter vocalization.

Moreover, through the combination and rational application of Chinese National vocal music and bel canto techniques from the Western, the coexistence and integration of the two different styles has gradually developed in this Modern Chinese National vocal music. Further, this thesis has employed the vocal analysis based on the advantages of the using bel canto technique on the Chinese National vocal music.

According to the interviewees, Western Classical music singing has built up for more than 300 years and it holds its own unique singing skills and scientific theory, and these singing skills with years of practicing, gradually recognised by the world, and so developing the art of singing.

### **5.3 Discussion of findings of the study**

Based on the data analysis in the Chapter 4, the results indicating that, although Western Classical music singing has its regional differences with Chinese National vocal music, it also possesses many similarities. In this finding, the integration of Western Classical singing music and Chinese National vocal music is the inevitable process that should be learned by every vocal learner. Certainly, the integration of Western Classical music and the Chinese National vocal music did not evade the original characteristics of Chinese National vocal music.

The detailed account of each approaches such as transcription, online video, manuscript as well as virtual fieldwork connecting the procedure of music analysis employed in this learning performing the data that helped in responding the three research objectives. The results indicated the instantaneous of findings focused on the difference between the two artistic singing styles, such as pronunciation cavity, vocal skills, work style, such as tempo and melody, characteristics of the vocal and others.

### **5.4 Suggestions for further research**

The study focuses on the singing style, vocal pedagogy, and vocal technique. Based on the results, it might offer for deeper analysis on the cover artwork of bel canto for the future researching. To a certain extent, the research constructs explicit and implicit cultural and

social meanings in Chinese pop music community. Furthermore, this is a case study that researching on the singer, soprano Wu Bixia. Thus, the research will provide more holistic method and guidance for Chinese vocal artist to look into it.

### **5.5 Limitation of the study**

The results and findings obtained from qualitative research can be biased, since the answers obtained from interviews depend on the status of the interviewee at that specific moment. There are no given answer choices for the qualitative questions which will subject to individual's preference and opinion.

It is therefore less appropriate to generalize the conclusion. Typically, qualitative research is carried out through focus group, interviews and observations. However, it could be more time-consuming and require more resources in order to gather the qualitative data. The qualitative data guides the researcher for gathering information and knowledge that are closely related to the topic and could be accustomed unlike the available secondary sources. In this research, the methodology will be primarily focusing on qualitative method in particular selecting the form of interview to conduct the following research (Li, 2006; Li, 2012).

### **5.6 Conclusion**

Through the successful artistic practicing vocalist, Wu Bixia has successful explored the Chinese National vocal music and Western Classical music singing and bring the tremendous influences and extensive discussion in today's Chinese vocal music.

There is the advantage of the integration Western Classical vocal technique on the Chinese National vocal music singing. It has evidenced that these two kinds of arts style display different way of performing style in terms of ornamentation such as tonality, vibrato and vocal register.

As a music learner, it is important to step out from the traditional rules and ideas and being open-minded in learning vocal music theories. Further, as music educators or music teachers, the teaching style should be diversified rather than simplistic. The development of the Chinese National vocal music can prove that integration Western vocal music method and the Chinese National vocal music is feasible and scientific. Although there have the huge components of differences in Chinese music and Western Music, including the culture, historical background, language and so on, each possesses its very own unique characteristics and charm. In the process of the integration of Chinese National vocal music and Western Classical music singing, although the through is confused and contradictory, but through Chinese vocalists continuous exploration, innovation and learning, they have better solved the combination of tradition and modernity, for the development of Chinese vocal music has built a new way.

In sum, it is worth to explore the process on combination the two singing methods and scientifically proofing their advantages and uniqueness in the vocal music system in the study. In order to involve more global music lovers on accepting this kind of singing style, it is possible to have the continuous research and efforts of all vocal music educators.

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