

# **An Analysis Of The Singing Of The Opera "Bai Mao Nv", "Hate Is Like A Mountain And Sorrow Is Like The Sea". --The Singing Of Guo Lanying, Peng Liyuan And Other Generations Of "Xi'er" As An Example**

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**Abstract:** China's first national new opera, The White Hairy Fairies, has had a notable impact on the rapid development of contemporary Chinese opera. It has also represented a significant milestone in the rapid development of Chinese vocal music. The opera is based on the local folklore of the Bai Mao Nv. Since its debut in 1945, the work has been revived on several occasions, featuring seven different artists who are well known to the Chinese public for playing the role of the heroine, Xi'er. This article presents the first comparative study and generalisation of the facial features, throat muscles and performance characteristics of the "Xi'ers", aiming to explore the evolution of modern Chinese opera vocal singing and to critique the declining Chinese language style therein. On the one hand, this paper makes up for the lack of a comparative study regarding the technical aspects of the seven Xi'ers in "Hate is like a mountain and sorrow is like the sea" in Chinese vocal music. On the other hand, this work complements the studies concerning the changing characteristics of "modern Chinese vocal opera singing" within English publications.

**Keywords:** Bai Mao Nv; Hate is like a mountain and sorrow is like the sea; singing; Technology; contrast.

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**I.Introduction:** Statement of the problem - from the opera "Bai Mao Nv, "Hate the High Mountains and Sorrow Like the Sea": In the 20th century, China experienced the impact of Western culture, and modern Chinese composers began to explore the trend of combining Chinese folk music with Western music. From 1942 to 1944, Yan'an's literary and artistic circles carried out a large-scale "Yangge Movement", which promoted the development of Yangge Opera "as a revolutionary weapon." This campaign provided a formal impetus to the development of Chinese new opera vocal culture during the 20th century. During this time, the Yan'an literary and artistic community produced and rehearsed over 300 Yangge operas, reaching an audience of eight million people. This movement offered the artistic nourishment and grounding for the creation and rehearsal of China's first new national opera, Bai Mao Nv; this was achieved by the teachers and students of the Department of Drama and Music at the Yan'an Lu Xun Academy of Literature and Arts in 1945. The birth of the opera, White Maiden, had an enormous impact on the rapid development of contemporary Chinese opera, as well as being a milestone in the advancement of the art of Chinese vocal music. Its significance is divided into three main aspects: political, communication and literary. On 28 May 1942, Zedong Mao orated at the Yan'an Literary and Art Symposium. In this speech(Li Shiyuan,2021), he stated that "literary and artistic works during the revolutionary period should create

all kinds of characters according to actual life and help the masses to move history forward."4 It was in this literary and artistic environment that the opera, White Maiden, was born. The opera was the outcome of a purposeful political ideology; the central notion expressed in the opera "directly touched the deepest emotional structure of the poor Chinese people, awakening them from the trauma of a thousand years of mental slavery. (Guangming Daily , 2021)" It is a work that closely aligns with the context of popular life, expressing the urgent need to "fight against feudal oppression" and to "develop the peasant class."The dissemination and influence was partly demonstrated by the fact that in 1945 the opera "Bai mao nv" was performed in Yan'an for more than 30 performances and was well received by the people. After 15 August of the same year, the cast split into two groups and left Yan'an at the same time to push on across the country(Sheng Wen, 10, 2013).The vast number of urban youth who volunteered to join the Chinese Liberation Army after watching The Bai Mao Nv had a positive and profound impact on inspiring and motivating people to join the liberation struggle(Zeng Yunxia,2018). After the founding of New China, the creation and development of new Chinese operas reached a second climax, and all of China's "melodramatic" repertoire, which depicts realistic themes and revolutionary historical genres, was profoundly influenced by the musical style and intent of Bai Mao Nv . Since its inception, the opera libretto — Bai

Mao Nv — has been adapted by Japan and other nations into various genres, including ballet, and has been well received by audiences globally (Jia B. Gender, 2015). In terms of musical technique, the performance lies in the fact that it was the first opportunity for traditional Chinese theatre singing techniques to be substantially incorporated into the structure of a Western opera. Furthermore, various local ditties and rap features were added to the singing of different characters, so as to depict different personalities of the characters. It pioneered modern Chinese opera and contributed to the development of modern Chinese vocal opera singing, as well as the formation of a fusion of Western and Chinese music. This work is of great significance to the creation and development of the "Chinese vocal" singing techniques proposed in modern times. The opera contains a triple space of political, folk and artistic expressions, which are mutually supportive. The artistic space is integrated into the political and folk expressions, while the political and folk expressions remain separate from each other. (Military, 2007) The aria "Hate is like a high mountain and a sea of sorrow" is an indictment of the cruel and ruthless feudal system. It is one of the most representative classics in "Bai Mao Nv". It is one of the most representative classical songs in the opera, and it is the aria 'Hate is like a mountain and sorrow is like the sea' by the heroine 'Xi'er'. The song is a turning point in the struggle against the feudal system and the awakening of the peasant class, which is oppressed by the landlord, for freedom and independence. This aria is located in the

middle and later parts of the opera, and is a significant part of the opera, embodying the spiritual core of the opera and expressing the spiritual aspirations of the people of the border areas<sup>i</sup> and the liberated areas<sup>ii</sup>.

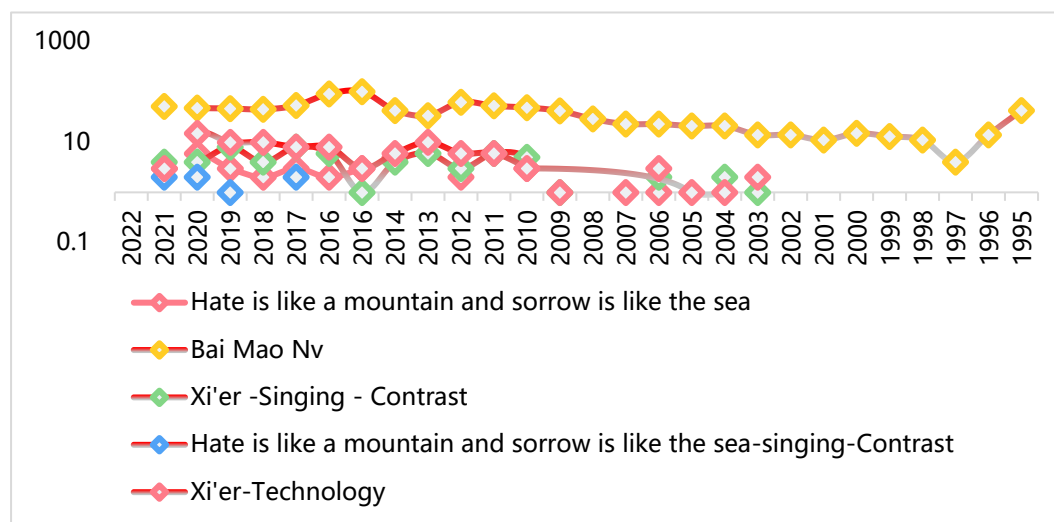
The lyrics and melody of this aria complement each other well and are extremely powerful; they span a broad vocal range, thereby rendering it challenging to sing. The primary melody incorporates a "Chinese north folk music style," while the accompaniment makes extensive use of Western instruments — including violins, cellos, clarinets and oboes — as well as Chinese instruments, such as the gong, small gong, erhu, banhu and sanshin; these styles are fused through usage of these instruments. The aria has a distinctly Western approach to opera composition, while reflecting the musical characteristics of the northern regions of China. With its outstanding political and social influence, as well as artistic character, the work has set a positive example for the creation and performance of modern Chinese folk opera singing; it is now a unique classic. The seven singers who have performed the opera between 1948 and 2021 were influenced by the aesthetics of the opera and the alterations in singing techniques within different Chinese eras. Therefore, this paper makes a positive contribution to the research of soprano vocal opera technology in contemporary China. The study of the evolution of the singing technique of "Hate is like a high mountain and sorrow is like the sea" provides a deep insight into the development of vocal opera techniques in modern China. The study of the evolution of the singing technique of 'Like a mountain

like a mountain, like a sea of sorrow' provides a great insight into the evolution of vocal opera technique in modern China.

**Objectives:** In order to make up for the lack of technical comparative studies of the seven "Xi'er" singers in "Hate is like a mountain

and sorrow is like the sea" in the Chinese vocal world, and to supplement the English publications on the changing characteristics of "modern Chinese opera singing".

**2. Methodology:** source of Data: CNLI; Google Scholar



Due to the special status of the opera "Bai Mao Nv" in the Chinese vocal music scene, it is not uncommon to find research papers on the opera, with a total of 1,084 articles published as of 4 January 2022, according to a CNLI search on the keyword " Bai Mao Nv ". The total number of articles published in Chinese core journals is 183, with a peak of 102 in 2015. The number of articles published under the keyword "hate is like a mountain and sorrow is like the sea" was 21, of which 5 articles reached the peak in 2014 and 4 articles in 2020, the second peak. Behind the two peaks in the publication of articles from 2014 to 2020, we can get a glimpse of the literary trend of the opera "Bai Mao Nv" in 2015. In 2014-2015, the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism celebrated the 70th anniversary of the opera "Bai Mao

Nv" with the launch of a 3D film and a new version of the opera " Bai Mao Nv ", which was performed by the third generation of The opera was artistically directed by Professor Peng Liyuan, who played the role of "Xi'er", and Professor Lei Jia, one of Professor Peng's students, acted in the opera as the fourth generation of "Xi'er", while the second generation of "Xi'er" Professor Guo Lanying provided singing and performance guidance. Under the influence of this event, the opera " Bai Mao Nv " toured the country for over a month from 6 November to 17 December 2015, with its premiere performance in Yan'An. Five years later, in 2020, the 75th anniversary of Bai Mao Nv , a wave of cultural retrospection was again launched, with a total of 363 articles on the keywords " Bai Mao Nv " and "development" indexed in

the period 1995-2021. The total number of articles published between 1995 and 2021 was 363, and between 2015 and 2021 there was a significant increase of 193. Behind the two peaks, we can see that each revival of the opera " Bai Mao Nv " has had a greater impact on the Chinese vocal academy, and it is possible to see that the Chinese vocal community is beginning to pay further attention to and demand the heritage and development of the work. In some of the literature, such as Li Man's 'The artistic characteristics of the six generations of the opera "Xi'er" and its inspiration for the development of Chinese opera', Wang Yanhua and Yan Tiejun's 'Reproduction of the classics - A discussion of the national opera " Bai Mao Nv "', and Fu Hui's 'The transmutation of the performance paradigm of the national opera -The performance of Xi'er in the opera "Bai Mao Nv" as an example', in which several popular singers such as Wang Kun, Guo Lanying, Peng Liyuan, You Hongfei, Tan Jing and Lei Jia are mentioned. The articles have referred to the performances of several popular singers such as Wang Kun, Guo Lanying, Peng Liyuan, You Hongfei, Tan Jing and Lei Jia, and have analysed the repertoire in terms of the singing style and performance of each section in order to extend the development of Chinese vocal music. However, there is no detailed comparative analysis of the singing techniques of the different singers who sang the famous song 'Hate is like a mountain and sorrow is like the sea', nor is there a more visual comparison of the singers' timbre, performance system characteristics, and vocal position. There is even less research on

the opera in the foreign literature searched on the Google Scholar, They are: Gender, women's liberation, and the nation-state: a study of the Chinese opera the white-haired girl Niu cheng biao(Niu cheng biao;2008);유 효 려.Challenges for Preserving and Leveraging Chinese Folk Ballads – “Bai mao shan ge”as an example Mapping a “New” Dramatic Canon: Rewriting the Legacy of Hong Shen ,Chinese Opera " Bai Mao Nv " Goes 3D Chinese and Foreign Cultural Exchange: English Edition 2016, No. 004 Gender, womens liberation, and the nation-state: a study of the Chinese opera Bai Mao Nv. Jia, Bo. Rutgers The State University of New Jersey - New Brunswick. 2015 Turning ghosts into people: 'The White-Haired Girl', revolutionary folklorism and the politics of aesthetics in modern China. Bohnenkamp, Max Lowell, The University of Chicago. These articles do not compare and contrast the singing states of the singers in detail, nor do they explore the evolution of singing techniques in Chinese vocal opera in the context of the evolution of the singing techniques of the female lead in The Bai Mao Nv. In this paper, we will further summarise and summarise the phenomena that have not been summarised above.

**3. Research methods:** survey and analysis method; literature research method; summary and induction method. For the purposes of this paper, the author has utilised the survey of opera fragment materials, the survey of singer materials for comparative analysis of singing methods, and an analysis of literature pertaining to opera research papers — both domestically and from abroad

— concerning Bai Mao Nv . As of December 19 2021, there has never been a research paper prior to this one regarding the seven artists who have played the role of Xi'er. The singing status of the artists who have portrayed Xi'er is organised and summarised, and the finding of the research presented. The production of this paper fills a gap in this research direction of modern Chinese vocal opera scholarship. Of the work materials that the author has been able to gather, complete video materials are included. The artists who have performed the opera are: Guo Lanying, Peng Liyuan, Tan Jing, Lei Jia, You Hongfei and Jiang Ning. In this article, the vocal technique of Ms Wang Kun, who sang the third act of the song "I want to live" is analysed, making use of audio recordings and interviews with her. This is because the first artist to portray Xi'er was not available due to the age of the production.

#### **4. Transmutation and development of the singing style**

##### **4.1 Transmutation and development of the singing style of "Hate is like a high mountain, and sorrow is like the sea."**

The opera was written in 1945 by He Jingzhi and Ding Yi, composed by Ma Ke, Zhang Lu, Qu Wei, Huanzhi, Xiang Sum, Chen Zi and Liu Chi, and directed by Wang Bin, Wang Dahua, Shu Qiang and Zhang Shuihua. In

1950, the opera was recorded as a musical dramatic film, which was initially brought to film and television viewers. The opera draws on local works such as the Northern Jin Opera. (Chen X, 2014) The story is founded on the folk tale of the White Hair Fairy from the Jinchaji border area. The famous song, "Hate is like a mountain and sorrow is like the sea", is delivered during the fourth act of the opera, and is the aria of the heroine, Xi'er. The song has in a non-repeated, three-part structure. The composer introduces the musical themes of "Hebei Bangzi" and "Qin Cavity", which are high and sorrowful. Additionally, the composer is able to depict the personality of the singing as the mood changes in this section. The singing technique of "rapping" is incorporated to the song, in order to reflect the changing character and emotions of Xi'er. In this section, Xi'er is oppressed by the local landlord — Huang Shiren — and is forced to hide in a cave in the mountains. Due to a chronic lack of salt, her hair has become white. She often visits the "grandmother's temple" in the mountains and fed on the temple's offerings in order to survive. One stormy night, Xi'er ran into and chased Huang Shiren and others who had sought shelter from the rain; she was treated as a "ghost" by them. Amid her anger and resentment, Xi'er performs this narrative aria in the first person.

The structure of the piece and the plot are tabulated as follows.

Introduction (subsections 1-7)	Part I (subsections 8-12)	Part II (subsections 22-47)	Part III (subsections 48-92)
Showcasing the	It shows the anger of	A calmer "Xi'er"	The story of "Xi'er"

fierceness of lightning and thunder on a stormy night, it lends an eerie atmosphere to the whole piece.	the tortured 'ghost' 'Xi'er' as he chases after his enemies in a thunder and lightning storm.	recounts his miserable experience of suffering in a cave for three years, eating tribute from the roots and wild fruits of the temple and turning his hair white.	asks God why she was made to look so bad, and complains about the ugly practices of the old society that forced people to become ghosts.
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#### **4.2 An analysis of the singing technique of the character, Xi'er, in the excerpt, "Hate is like a mountain and sorrow is like the sea".**

The following is an analysis of the singing methods of the seven sopranos — Wang Kun, Guo Lanying, Peng Liyuan, You Hongfei, Tan Jing, Lei Jia and Jiang Ning — in chronological order. The differences in their singing techniques are summarised.

##### **4.2.1 Wang Kun: “operatic singing method” prototype stage.**

The opera, *Bai Mao Nv*, was first performed in 1945 by the North China United Literary and Industrial Troupe. Wang Kun, Meng Yu and Li Bo were the initial artists to interpret the role of Xi'er; of these, Wang Kun, a native of Tang County in Hebei, was 20 years old when she played the role. Wang Kun herself, like Meng Yu and Li Bo, was trained in the Western Bel canto style of singing, a vocal state in which the falsetto is a combination of many voices. In order to better suit the character, Wang Kun abandoned the Western singing techniques of lifting the palate and soft palate, as well as the Bel canto singing

technique of leaning back and vibrating the vocal folds at high frequencies. Instead, she opted to adopt the traditional Chinese folk singing method, which is more akin to the vocal habits of the northern Chinese language. This native singing method is based on the real voice. This style of singing, which is based on emotion and performance, was widely popular in the 1940s in the Yangge Opera, which has strong northern operatic characteristics. Wang Kun added the Bel canto style of belly breathing to this singing form, and incorporated chest breathing to the lower and middle ranges, so as to increase the tone's volume. This new style of singing, which was introduced in the 1940s, is known today in Chinese vocal science as the “opera singing method” (Yang Shuguang and Jin Yongzhe, 2010); it is characterised by using the straight vocalisation technique of Chinese folk singing, represented by local opera, supplemented by abdominal breathing. In the audio recording of Wang Kun's performance of “I want to live”, she employs the “operatic singing method” to deliver a high, bright tone with a loud volume. This gives a sense of

straightforwardness and of drenching, while maintaining a transparent tone, a sustained breathing and a voice that is less likely to suffer fatigue. In their study of Chinese opera singing, published in the second issue of Chinese Music (quarterly) in 2010, Yang Shuguang and Jin Yongzhe describe the practice of opera singing by Wang Kun, Meng Yu and Li Bo as "opening the door to Chinese opera singing." This style of singing allows the vocalist to enunciate and release out words more clearly and eloquently; there remain many artists in the Chinese folk vocal community today who use this "operatic singing method."

#### **4.2.2 Guo Lanying: "operatic singing method" initial stage.**

A native of Pingyao, Shanxi, Guo Lanying studied and performed in traditional Chinese drama between the ages of six to sixteen. Subsequently, she studied Hebei opera, opera criticism and Beijing opera. It was these long years of developing operatic skills that made her stand out at the Yan'an Literary and Artistic Symposium in 1948, where she was acclaimed for her skilful portrayal of the part of Xi'er. Guo Lanying first incorporated the operatic body and the vocal characteristics of Shanxi opera into the aria, developing with a foundation of the early "opera singing method" and achieving a high degree of unity cohesion between singing and acting. In the 1982 video, Guo Lanying Opera Fragments Evening, included in the China Guo Lanying Art Development Foundation, Guo Lanying, in her fifties, again performed the song, "Hate is like a high mountain and sorrow is like the sea." In this piece, her operatic stance

is highly integrated with her singing. In the video, she performs with her operatic stance and singing voice. She demonstrates more of her "character-based" vocalisation technique, singing "Lightning, tear apart the black clouds... O thunder, you split the mouth of the river... Three years of suffering in the cave... ...God open your eyes, I want revenge!" The words "flash", "loud", "three" and "old" contained in these lines are emphasised through the rhyme scheme. The singing style of Shanxi opera is integrated well with the melody of the lyrics. She highlights the brightness of the tone in the transition between the real voice in the lower and middle registers, as well as the falsetto voice in the upper registers. Furthermore, her performance defines the anger and delicate emotional changes of Xi'er. In the introductory section of the song, Guo Lanying appears with her back to the audience and, after a loud thunderclap, she turns and shows her face, displaying a ghost-like white shadow and giving the audience a sense of fear and trepidation. When she sings the line, "I've suffered and gone white," she creates classic movements of anguish, such as raising her hands, ruffling her hair on both sides in rhythm, stroking it downwards and then raising it above her head. These gesticulations are highly expressive and depict the character's emotions and personality in this section; they have been rehearsed and modified numerous times and continue to be used today.

#### **4.2.3 Peng Liyuan : "All-channel singing" breakthrough stage.**

In 1985, to commemorate the 40th and 50th



anniversaries of the opera " Bai Mao Nv ", a revival of the opera was presented by the China Opera and Dance Theatre, with the third generation of "Xi'er" being performed by Professor Peng Liyuan, a renowned Chinese soprano and vocal educator. She absorbed the singing styles of artists such as Wang Kun and Guo Lanying, and further blended them with the Bel canto style. At this stage, the new technical term "full channel (Liu Juan,2011)" emerged, and the technical changes in Chinese vocal opera singing in the 1980s, represented by her singing practice, are a significant part of the history of Chinese vocal music. This was evident in the innovation of the singing state of the face and throat, the breath and the performance style. In her performance of "Hate the Mountain, Sorrow the Sea", for example, Professor Peng Liyuan adopted a "full channel" vocal technique and used a more natural and subtle bite in her vocal delivery that is more in line with contemporary Chinese speaking habits. She has also streamlined the "opera" singing style to maintain some of the key characteristics of the singing voice, while adding the vibrato and head resonance of Bel canto singing, tightening the vocal folds in the lower and middle registers in pursuit of the natural emotion of rap, and adding a high position singing method with the soft palate and jaw hanging up in the upper register for the first time, giving a more comfortable listening experience with a non-sharp, rounded tone in the upper register. The sound of the voice is more fluid and The result is a smoother, more spacious and fuller sound, without a sense of squeeze or urgency. In terms of performance,

Peng adopts a more robust approach to acting, retaining the classic dramatic movements and pacing in his theatrical performances and then streamlining them in order to maintain the best of the singing and the integrity of the performance. In my opinion, in the rendition of 'Hate is like a mountain and sorrow is like the sea', Professor Peng's singing method is currently more in line with the personality and characteristics of the character of 'Xi'er'. As the character's age is set, she is the daughter of a 16-year-old tenant farmer, and her tone should be sweet and delicate, high and bright, and her singing style should be more rustic and pure. In Peng's singing, her vocal cords are fully closed, her soprano voice is rounded but not overly firm and determined, her diaphragm in the abdominal cavity controls the strength of her voice with appropriate elasticity, and her breath is distributed in a way that controls the gradual strength and weakness of the song with great stability. In the interpretation of the language, the repertoire reflects the typical Chinese language bite of modern Chinese opera, that is, the vocal reversion to rhyme and the emphasis on the head of the words, with the corners of the mouth naturally upwards and the smile muscles raised when singing. In some of the longer lines of the piece, there is also an emotional rap, a fluttering of the accent and other techniques, which Pang combines with the Western technique of singing with the jaw hanging and the soft palate raised, a feature that singers need to be particularly aware of. Today, many singers place too much emphasis on the lifting of the palate, pursuing the resonance of the vocal cavity and the unity of tone to demonstrate

their mastery of the singing technique, thus neglecting the essence of the Chinese linguistic habit of biting, which is the ultimate goal of Chinese singing Chinese works, and not putting the cart before the horse.

#### **4.2.4 YouHongfei and TanJing :A transitional stage in the exploration of the combination of multiple singing styles.**

In Li Man's paper, "The Artistic Characteristics of Six Generations of "Xi'er" in the Opera "Bai Mao Nv" and its Implications for the Development of Chinese Opera", two performers of "Xi'er" are mentioned. They are Ms. You Hongfei, who played the role of Xi'er in the rehearsal of the opera "Bai Mao Nv" by the Central Opera House in 2009 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the founding of China, and Ms. Tan Jing, who played the role of Xi'er in the rehearsal of "Bai Mao Nv" by the China Oriental Song and Dance Company in 2010 to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Party. The paper is based on this thesis. This paper builds on that thesis to summarise and describe the commonalities and personalities in the singing of these two performers.

You Hongfei graduated from the China Conservatory of Music in 1996 and is a soprano working for the Central Opera House. She uses a pure Bel canto style of singing in her interpretation of this part, based on the abdominal breathing method, with a greater proportion of head and chest resonance, a wider opening of the vocal fissure in the larynx, a highly elevated soft

palate in the pharynx, a vocal position close to the pharyngeal orifice, an active and more exaggerated facial expression, a marked elevation of the laughing muscles, and a rounded mouth. In terms of tone, You Hongfei has a more matte and broad tone, which is significantly reduced from the sweet, delicate and bright tone that tends to be common to the other Xi'er players. In terms of stage performance, she adopts a more naturalistic Stanislavski performance style.

Tan Jing is the first singer in China to combine "pop", "folk" and "bel canto" singing methods. She graduated from the China Conservatory of Music in 1998 with a bachelor's degree in folk vocal music and from the PLA Academy of Arts in 2006 with a postgraduate degree in popular singing. In singing this excerpt, she experimented with the popular, American and folk singing styles, adding more of a "pop" style of singing in the lower and middle registers with a combination of real and airy voices in a large channel and a large fulcrum, with a more natural rapping style. In terms of breath, Tan's belly breathing is not used much, so when she keeps her soft palate up and sings in the large passage towards the pharynx, she does not tighten and close her vocal cords causing her voice to tremble greatly, creating a sense of whimpering and sorrowful weeping. In the middle and upper thresholds she uses more of a 'operatic singing style' in which the vocal fissure is tightly closed and the tone moves closer to the nasal vestibule and the nasal threshold, while in the upper thresholds she uses a 'bel canto' in which the vocal fissure in the larynx is relaxed, the epiglottis and mouth are more spacious and

the soft palate is highly raised. The "Bel canto" method of singing. In this way, however, there is a lack of firmness in the voice, a lack of unity in the tone and a greater loss of character in the opera. In the performance of this piece, Tan does not perform the first passage with her back to the audience, and in terms of technique, she modifies her gestures when she sings "I'm all white", replacing the first downward stroking of the hair on both sides with a lifting of the hair with both hands to open it to the sides, and also in terms of movement. The performance has also been changed from a theatrical pace to a more natural and modern way of performing.

#### **4.2.5 Leijia:"The stable stage of the "convergence of Chinese and Western singing styles.**

In 2015, in a revival of the opera "Bai mao Nv", organised by the Ministry of Culture and directed by Peng Liyuan, Professor Lei Jia played the role of "Xi'er" in the A role for the audience (Li Mengni, 2019). Lei Jia is a famous Chinese soprano who has won the Plum Blossom Award, China's highest theatre award, as well as the Wenhua Performance Award, China's highest professional stage government award, and the Golden Bell Award for her performance as Xi'er in the opera The "Bai mao Nv". (Li Jiti, 2020) When she performed this piece, she increased the proportion of Western singing style, based on the "all-channel" form of singing taught by Peng Liyuan. She also shaped more resonant cavities in the middle and lower registers, pursued the unity of tone between the middle and lower registers and

the upper registers, and maintained raised facial smile muscles to keep the Chinese character. In the first part of the song, "Hate is like a high mountain and sorrow is like the sea", the use of the noun "sea" has a distinctive "dragging" character. Here, she uses the unified Bel canto method of belly breathing and head resonance, employing the power of the diaphragm to control the crescendo of the "dragging" voice. In this way, she forms a Chinese opera style when singing the dragging voice, while maintaining the characteristics of singing by the pharyngeal tube, lifting the soft palate, keeping the breathing passages open in a high position and tightening the vocal cords. When the dramatic conflict within the song heightens, this mode of singing is ideal for expressing the large jumps in high and low tones, as well as the great changes of mood. In the weakening of the operatic singing style, the stability of the breath and the balance and unity between the breath and the upper and lower face are further enhanced; this very much aligns with the technical stability of large arias. In terms of the expression of emotion, this author believes that Professor Lei Jia has further developed the emotional characteristics of Professor Peng Liyuan's repertoire. She has taken the rap style of the final line of the piece, "I am a human being", to an astounding level with a single word, a single pearl, a look of humiliation, anger, sadness and determination. Moreover, Lei's The image of Ray itself is soft and delicate, with a delicate and emotional tone; the inner strength and resilience of the performance contrasts sharply with the image. This mode of singing also sacrifices some of the subtlety

and directness of Chinese expression, as well as losing some of the singer's emotional attuning to the melody, drawing increasing attention to the singer's own vocal technique, as opposed to the more natural character traits inherent in the role itself. Through the means in which this theatrical spectacle is performed, there is a gradual transition from listening and watching to "classicising" and "benchmarking" the action. Such a performance style also denotes the commencement of the transition from the Stanislavski system to the Mei Lanfang system of modern Chinese vocal opera performance.

#### **4.2.6 Jiang Ning :The "Chinese Singing" stage of cultural confidence.**

Jiang Ning, a soprano from the China Opera and Dance Theatre, played the role of "Xi'er" in the B role in the 2015 revival of the opera "Bai Mao Nu" (Jiang Ning, 2018), sponsored by the Ministry of Culture. In September 2021, in the second concert performance of the Ethnic Group of the 40th National Vocal Exhibition, the new generation of young actress Jiang Ning, who played "Xi'er", collaborated with the Harbin Symphony Orchestra on this classic piece. In her version of the piece, which is full of passion and fervour, she heightens the emotion, giving a more passionate sense of the "Xi'er's" indignation. In the unity of her voice and the fusion of Chinese and Western singing styles, Jiang Ning places greater emphasis on the stylistic characteristics of the "operatic singing" folk style in her interpretation of "Hate is like a mountain and sorrow is like the sea". Unlike Lei Jia, Jiang Ning utilises

more throat tension in the lower and middle registers, and highlights the operatic style with quicker straight fluttering in the high and low registers. She combines the Bel canto style in the high registers with a tighter pharyngeal opening, closer to the butterfly sinus, and a larger breathing channel; this adds to the rigidity and pathos represented by the label, "White Maiden Aria". The music of the first generation of Xi'ers, which is primarily composed of northern opera, is a result of Jiang's addition of a more "operatic style". The musical form of Xi'er returns, creating a sense that "Chinese singing" is increasing in confidence, thereby providing a requirement for further discussion of the new era of Chinese vocal opera singing. The absence of a long period of bonding between Jiang and the Harbin Symphony has built barriers in the musical performance, limiting the ease of the performance. Additionally, due to the constraints on the volume of the human voice in the collaboration with the symphony, the vocalists have neglected to raise their vocal position in the second half of the performance in pursuit of emotion and volume; this has generated issues including the lifting of breath and shortness of breath. As this is a concert version, it is not possible to analyse the movement of the actors. In the performance, Jiang's control of the character of Xi'er is more focused on the character's emotions of suffering, but he neglects to portray Xi'er's young age and youthfulness. In the expressions and performances of the actors, she gives more of a formulaic and even mature interpretation, while neglecting the spirituality, simplicity and simplicity of the characterisation.

**4.2.7 Discussion.** From the video of the 2nd performance of the 14th National Vocal Music Exhibition in the Ethnic Group in 2021, which is publicly available on social media, we learn that after Jiang Ning's performance, the expert jury member, Professor Lei Jia, made a comment on his singing. She emphasized that the power of the character Xi'er to live as a human being is the core of the piece and is the reason why the work has resonated and endured. She suggests that a classic work like *The Bai Mao Nv*, the cornerstone of Chinese folk opera, has been passed down and evolved over the past 70 years and has been performed in many versions, with each generation of composers making new compositions and changes in each version. She stressed the need for the singers to compare several scores and ultimately choose the version that best fits the original repertoire, to follow the score rigorously and not to add too much ornamentation subjectively. She concluded by emphasising once again that *The White Maiden* is a "red book (Ming xi ,2010)" for all of us Chinese folk vocalists, and that we should always learn from the past.

**4.3 Conclusion:** the new Chinese opera, *Bai Mao Nv*, has become a classic Chinese opera, the development of the Chinese vocal technique has also been revolutionised. The Western abdominal breathing method, in addition to the rhyming and biting habits of the Chinese language, combined with the facial features of raised smile muscles and uplifted corners of the mouth, the use of tightened and closed vocal cords to produce purity of tone, have all become typical

features of Chinese vocal singing. At this time, Chinese opera singers are more inclined to perform the climactic passages with large vocal fissures, thereby falling into a specific stage of re-exploration and breakthrough. There is a tendency for the singers to perform a showier style of repertoire, as well as a propensity to select large narrative repertoire — such as lyric and florid arias — to demonstrate technique. Alongside this, there is also an inclination to ignore Chinese language conventions and stylistic features, in favour of a more Westernised pharyngeal singing state. This raises the question as to whether this stylistic evolution is the development of Chinese vocal music or the outset of its decline. Furthermore, is this development a trend towards a more Westernised vocal state or is it a natural choice in the combination of Chinese and Western vocal music, in response to the aesthetic mood of the times and the audience? The author posits that the Chinese vocal community should pay more consideration to the return of the combination of Chinese linguistic habits and Chinese compositional techniques, and that the varying regional characteristics demonstrated in the composers' repertoires are sufficient for vocal learners to explore the different pharyngeal and facial characteristics of singing. This can help to achieve true national cultural confidence and perform new songs that truly belong to China.

**5.Suggestions :** Singing for the working people at large was not only applicable to the bygone era, but also to the present day. Today, as this role is reprised and this masterpiece

interpreted, one can perceive the power of heritage and development. Additionally, it is evident that most modern performers, who have grown up in a time of peace and happiness, sing lines like "I am a human being" with more of a performative "ruthlessness and pain" in their emotions, rather than a genuine "hatred and resentment" towards the archaic society. This has led the author to be anxious regarding the possibility that the new Chinese opera will gradually become a plight of the "classical" arts in contemporary China. Based on the formation of the same work by Chinese sopranos of different periods, as well as on the analysis of literature and video materials collected from different periods, the author has summarised several stages in the development of vocal singing techniques for the new Chinese opera sopranos, which are as follows. In the heritage and evolution of the Xi'er's singing, a corner of the development of Chinese vocal singing can be glimpsed; from the prototype stage of traditional Chinese "opera singing", represented by Wang Kun and Guo Lanying, to the initial stage of the "combination of Chinese and Western singing", depicted by Peng Liyuan. The breakthrough stage of "all-channel" singing followed the combination of Chinese and Western singing methods, to the completely Westernized vocalisation methods represented by You Hongfei and the "pop", "Chinese national" and "Chinese opera" singing methods represented by Tan Jing. This then transitioned to the experimental stage of combining "pop", "Chinese folk" and "Bel canto", represented by Tan Jing, and later to the stable stage of

"the convergence of Chinese and Western singing methods," represented by Lei Jia. Finally, the current stage of "Chinese singing", represented by young singers — such as Jiang Ning — has evolved. Throughout the evolution of Chinese vocal opera singing techniques, it is clear that the singing techniques of Chinese female singers have developed from their initial straight, natural, single-voice style to a three-dimensional, composite and unified real-falsetto form of singing. Furthermore, their linguistic habits have altered from a strong dialectal flavour to a standard Mandarin pronunciation. The performance style began to evolve from the Stanislavski system to the Mei Lanfang system; in the beginning, operatic performance was the focus and singing was the supplement; in the present day, singing and character features are the focus, supplemented by forms of performance. The gradual programming of performance styles, alongside a certain abandonment and balance of operatic performance techniques, are among the various alterations that demonstrate that the art of singing in modern Chinese vocal opera has gradually moved from a state of natural exploration to classicisation and paradigmatisation, in the process of evolution. In discussing the development of modern Chinese vocal opera singing techniques, the author suggests that vocalists should pay more attention to the character and features of the "person" in the drama, in order to realise a high degree of unity between musical technique and the age, personality and situation of the character, and to establish a balance between the stylistic

nature of Chinese “opera songs” and the style of Western Bel canto. This combination enables contemporary Chinese people to better interpret the tolerance and development of imported culture, as well as the inheritance of the classics, and to present the characters' personalities in a more comprehensive manner. In light of the interpretations of several generations of Xi'er, this author believes that, in singing this repertoire, the singer must get closer to the heart of the character and understand the age and experience of Xi'er. An overly Western interpretation of the performance removes some of the temperament of the character. Nonetheless, it is also significant to note that the operatic gestures and steps should be somewhat simplified, albeit while retaining the classic movements. As Chinese vocal music becomes increasingly “business card” orientated, it is vital to remember the importance that Chinese music requires of the Chinese language and the Chinese mindset.

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