

## Abstract

Chinese art song was born at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Western art song had been brought into China and came in contact with traditional Chinese culture. During that period, composers such as Zhao Yuanren and Qing Zhu, who had an experience of studying music overseas, started to compose songs, which combined classical Chinese poetry with piano accompaniment and Western composition techniques. Such a fusion of Eastern and Western musical tradition gradually took root in China. Over decades of creative exploration, Chinese composers managed to develop a unique style, reflecting both tradition and contemporary situation.

This paper will present an overview of the development of Chinese art song throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, based on previous research, and drawing on methodology from the fields of music historiography, dramaturgy and vocal pedagogy. The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the characteristic features of 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese art songs and discuss different aspects of their performance, so as to provide singers with some information necessary for a better understanding and performance of those compositions.

The first chapter presents a definition of art song and discusses the birth of this genre in China, closely linked to the New Culture Movement. The following three chapters trace the development of Chinese art song, divided into three periods: 1920s-1940s, 1950s-1970s and 1980s to the end of the century. Special emphasis is placed on the first, formative period, which produced a vast number of excellent works. Chapter five summarizes the characteristic features of 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese art song and presents some reflections on the future development of this genre in China, as well as proposes certain adjustments to using bel canto technique in the performance of Chinese art songs, dictated by the nature of Chinese language, its prosody, as well as Chinese aesthetic canons and musical tradition.

In modern world, both pluralistic and cosmopolitan, it is especially important to cherish local tradition. One of the aims of writing this paper was to make a small contribution to promoting Chinese music and traditional aesthetics, which should have its place in the treasure chest of world culture.

**Key words:** Chinese art song; 20<sup>th</sup> century; development; characteristic features