

Discussion on the Characteristics and Skills of Tenor Singing in Different Musical Styles

Wang Moran

Vocal Performance, Conservatoire of Genoa, Genova, 16121, Italy

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Abstract: This article delves into the characteristics and singing skills of tenor within a range of musical genres. Classical music, opera, pop music, musicals, and folk music each have their own unique features when it comes to tenor singing. To further optimize and develop the singing of tenors, this article emphasizes the common skills of tenor singing (breathing control, resonance position adjustment, and proper vocal cords utilization) as well as differentiated singing skills under different music styles. Through an in-depth analysis, this study aims to furnish tenor singers with personalized training guidelines, tailored to accommodate the demands of multiple singing styles.

1. Introduction

Singing, as an art form, carries rich cultural connotations and profound personal emotions. In the vast universe of music, it serves not only as an outlet for emotions but also as a manifestation of cultural characteristics. Particularly in high note singing, with its technical challenge and expressiveness, it has always been a key measure of a singer's artistic level. Although research on vocal techniques has been quite extensive, systematic analysis of high note singing techniques across different musical styles remains relatively scarce, especially for tenor voices. Meanwhile, as global connections become increasingly tight, the differences between various musical genres are gradually diminishing, and singers must be proficient in diverse musical singing techniques and able to switch freely between them. Therefore, [1]an in-depth study of the characteristics and techniques of tenor singing in various musical styles is crucial for cultivating singers with cross-cultural understanding and technical diversity. The aim of this article is to complement areas that have not been explored in the existing academic field, revealing the commonalities and individual skills of tenor singing in various styles.

2. Overview of Singing High Notes

Singing high notes refers to the use of the high note range in musical performances. For this kind of singing, performers need to master specific techniques to accurately present notes in the high register while maintaining sonic beauty and expressive power.

Singing high notes can be classified into several categories based on vocal ranges: Tenor: In the male vocal range, the high notes are particularly noteworthy. For instance, tenor singers often deliver classic performances in operas. [2]Soprano: Women generally have a higher vocal range

than men, and soprano, as the highest voice in the female register, is an important part of vocal music. Treble: In children's vocal music, the high notes are characterized by their clear and transparent tone, often heard in children's choirs. Through these classifications, we can gain a deeper understanding of how singing high notes is applied and expressed in different musical styles and cultural backgrounds, as well as the crucial role this skill plays in music education and vocational skill cultivation.[3]

3. Characteristics of Singing High Notes in Different Musical Styles

3.1 Singing High Notes in Classical Music

In the realm of classical music, tenor singing particularly emphasizes technical proficiency and sonic aesthetic requirements. For singers, technically, maintaining stable breathing to support the voice is a fundamental requirement. However, they must also precisely control the high notes to respond to the complex variations in melody and the diversity of rhythms. Additionally, the high notes in classical music are renowned for their clarity of sound and the smoothness of musical lines.

3.2 Singing High Notes in Opera

In opera, the emotional delivery of tenor roles is particularly valued. Singers portraying such roles must employ profound emotional expression to complement the dramatic tension of the opera. For example, in Puccini's opera "Turandot," the tenor role in the aria "Nessun Dorma" not only requires the singer to showcase a vast vocal range and control, but also to convey the character's emotions and mental state through the timbre of their voice and facial expressions. Furthermore, in opera, singers often need to maintain the consistency and stability of their voice while executing complex stage movements, which undoubtedly poses higher demands on the singers' physical endurance and technical proficiency.

3.3 Singing High Notes in Pop Music

In the realm of pop music, tenor parts often emphasize the expression of personal characteristics and the direct expression of inner emotions. Performers enhance the charm and appeal of songs by utilizing diverse vocal techniques such as falsetto, breathy singing, and mixed voice.

3.4 Singing High Notes in Musical Theater

During musical theater performances, tenors need to integrate singing skills with performing arts. This not only requires them to possess exceptional vocal skills, but also outstanding acting talent. The high notes in musical theater often feature catchy melodies paired with energetic stage movements, providing audiences with an intense visual and auditory experience.

3.5 Singing High Notes in Folk Music

In folk music, tenor singers emphasize the natural expression of the voice. In Chinese folk music, for instance, in pieces like "Lofty Mountains and Flowing Water," the high notes are often concise yet highly infectious. Performers convey deep emotions and rich storylines through subtle fluctuations in volume and nuanced control of dynamics. The singing style of tenors in folk music often presents a simple and unadorned state, reflecting the rich cultural connotations behind it and showcasing the unique charm of different regions.[4]

4. Commonalities and Differences in Singing High Notes Techniques

4.1 Common Techniques

4.1.1 Breathing Control

In tenor singing, precise control of breathing is pivotal for maintaining the stability of high notes. Firstly, practicing abdominal breathing can effectively enhance the ability to control the diaphragm. Specifically, when inhaling, let the abdomen expand and bulge out, ensuring that the inhaled air goes deep into the abdomen rather than the chest, thus maximizing the amount of air taken in. During exhalation, use the tension of the abdominal and back muscles to steadily release the airflow, producing a continuous and balanced sound. Additionally, tenor singers need to train in quickly switching between breathing and vowel production to ensure that the sound quality and volume are not compromised due to insufficient breath when performing continuous phrases. To achieve precise control, significant time and dedication must be invested in specialized training and consistent vocal practice to refine the technique.

4.1.2 Resonance Position

For tenor singers, achieving the correct resonance placement is essential to developing a rich and powerful singing voice with strong projection. The specific techniques involve enhancing the resonance effect of the voice in the head cavity through specialized training, which makes the high notes brighter and clearer. By imitating the sound of "buzzing," singers can feel the vibrations in their heads, helping to create resonance in the head. To optimize voice resonance, singers need to adjust the opening and closing of the mouth and throat,[5] relaxing the throat and opening the mouth appropriately to create a better resonance environment for the voice. For instance, repeated practice of the basic vowels "ah" and "oh" can help singers master the optimal resonance techniques. During these exercises, attention should be paid to the proper movement of the vocal cords to ensure a smooth transition of resonance to the high note part, avoiding undesirable conditions such as a suppressed or harsh sound.

4.1.3 Proper Vocal Cords Utilization

The proper use of vocal cords plays a pivotal role in tenor singing. The key lies in balancing the tension of the vocal cords to prevent fatigue or damage caused by excessive tension. In practical application, the "mixed voice" technique can be adopted, which combines chest voice and head voice. The aim is to reduce the burden on the vocal cords while maintaining the integrity and expressiveness of the sound. For singers, when transitioning from chest voice to head voice, it is necessary to adjust the intensity of breathing and the use of vocal cords to achieve the best balance between the two. It is recommended to practice specific techniques under the guidance of a professional vocal music teacher to ensure the correctness of the technique and the healthy development of the high notes.[6]

4.2 Differentiated Techniques

4.2.1 Tenor Techniques in Classical Music

In the realm of classical music, tenor singers must master a unique set of singing techniques to meet the high standards of sound purity and nuanced emotional expression. Firstly, singers must grasp the linear fluidity of the voice to ensure a smooth transition in singing, especially in handling

jumps and short notes in musical compositions. To achieve this, orderly training in breath control is essential to maintain the fluidity of tone and prevent disruptions in the musical line due to technical issues. Secondly, precise intonation control is required. This not only demands singers to accurately sing each note, but also requires them to subtly manipulate high notes to convey the emotional depth of the work. Mastering this skill requires significant time investment in ear training and musical theory studies to achieve a high level of execution. Furthermore, complex musical ornamentation techniques such as vibrato, portamento, and polyphony are often considered common expressive devices in classical music. Tenor singers must learn to utilize these skills while maintaining the integrity of musical aesthetics to enhance their expressive power in singing.

4.2.2 Tenor Techniques in Opera

In opera, tenors need to focus on enhancing the dramatic quality and expressive power of their voices to ensure precise vocal adjustments in complex plotlines and intense emotions. Here are several techniques and methods of operation: firstly, the layering and power control of the voice. Singers need to utilize their high-note techniques and adjust the loudness and depth of their voices according to the changing emotions of their characters. For instance, in scenarios where anger or excitement needs to be expressed, singers should use abdominal strength to give their voices more power and impact. Specific practice methods involve integrating emotional expression simulations into daily practices, such as reading poetry or dramatic lines to practice emotional transitions and their impact on sound; secondly, the application of stage breathing techniques. Tenors need to maintain stable breathing while constantly moving. Practice has shown that singing while walking or performing stage actions on stage is an effective way to improve the ability of voice control. This method challenges the singer's intonation and sound ray control under varying physical conditions through gradual increases in movement difficulty and speed; thirdly, the control and expression of long notes. Long notes are an important means of expressing the deep emotions of a character. Tenors need to gradually increase the intensity of emotion during long notes, which can be achieved through continuous practice, gradually increasing or decreasing the loudness of the long notes.

4.2.3 Tenor Techniques in Pop Music

In pop music, tenor singers' techniques are emphasized in the realm of personalized expression and direct emotional delivery. Technically, it involves the careful adjustment and embellishment of tone color, such as the use of techniques like vibrato, portamento, and echo. These methods not only enhance the singer's expressive power but also highlight the artist's personal characteristics. For instance, singers can utilize delicate vibrato during the climax of a song to deepen emotional delivery, or incorporate portamento at the end of specific phrases to further enhance the melody's pleasantness and appeal. Meanwhile, the flexible utilization of multiple vocal modes is crucial in pop music. Tenor singers often need to master seamless transitions from full voice to falsetto to meet the demands of dynamics and emotional variations in pop music expression. During actual singing, singers need to manipulate the vocal cords skillfully to transition smoothly between different vocal ranges, creating a comfortable and engaging auditory experience. Furthermore, the genuine expression of emotions is also vital. As a tenor, one must excel in utilizing subtle changes in sound to vividly convey the emotions within the lyrics, allowing listeners to experience the profound emotions embedded in every word. In order to evoke a resonance with the listeners, a vocalist must profoundly comprehend the emotional content and setting of a song, and then utilize the warmth, timbre, and intensity of their voice to forge an emotional bond with the listeners.

4.2.4 Tenor Techniques in Musical Theater

In musical theater, tenors need to pay special attention to perfectly integrating their voices with their character performances. Role-playing in vocal delivery is an essential expressive technique. Male singers, when singing high notes, must appropriately adjust the thickness and delivery method of their voices based on the personality traits of the character they are portraying and the demands of the storyline. At the same time, the projection of the voice plays a crucial role in the performing arts. Musical theater often occurs on vast stages, and male tenors need to train to ensure that their voices can cover every corner of the theater while maintaining quality. It's not just about the volume of the voice, but also how to enhance the delivery by utilizing body language and facial expressions. Additionally, in musical theater performances, tenors need to master singing and dancing skills, which are indispensable to their performance effect. In numerous musical theater productions, singers must maintain the stability of their voices on complex stages. To achieve a balance between movement and voice during performances, cross-disciplinary integrated practice combining dance and vocal music is necessary.

4.2.5 Tenor Techniques in Folk Music

In the performance of folk music, tenors need to proficiently utilize a series of special techniques, which are crucial for them to interpret the unique emotions and cultural connotations of folk music. Firstly, mastering the natural resonance of the voice is essential. Compared to classical music, folk music is closer to the original way of sound transmission. When performing songs, singers need to relax their throat muscles, reduce artificial control of vocal resonance, and allow the voice to release instinctively, achieving the purity and naturalness that folk music pursues. To master this skill, singers need to cultivate it by imitating natural sounds over a long period. Secondly, making delicate adjustments to the tone color and intensity of the voice is important to cater to the emotional expression demands of folk music. Folk music often carries the responsibility of expressing complex emotions, conveying diverse feelings such as joy, sorrow, and celebration. Male singers, when singing high notes, can adjust the depth and speed of their breathing to change the tone color of their voices, making them sound warmer or more penetrating. Thirdly, adapting to the pronunciation characteristics of different regional styles is necessary. Music stemming from the folks displays individualistic melodies and rhythms due to the disparities in regional cultures. Tenors must master the specific pronunciation and singing techniques of a particular region to ensure the accuracy and regional flavor of their performances. To achieve this, they usually need to listen to a large amount of folk music from that region and engage in direct communication and collaboration with local musicians.

5. Conclusion

Different musical styles impose specific technical and emotional demands on the performance of high notes. The research presented in this article not only offers practical guidance for tenor singers but also delivers invaluable teaching resources for vocal educators. Looking ahead, the techniques and presentation approaches in high note singing will continue to undergo advancements. Performers can now leverage artificial intelligence and sound editing software as innovative tools for honing their skills in high note singing, diverging from conventional training methods. Furthermore, amidst the deepening global cultural exchange, the once clear boundaries between traditional and contemporary styles are gradually fading, providing vocalists with an expanded realm to explore the utilization of high notes within the context of stylistic fusion.

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