

# Analysis of "Authentic Performance" in the Style of Italian Songs of the 17th Century

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**Keywords:** 17th century, Italian songs, Authentic performance

**Abstract:** This paper attempts to restore the requirements of decorative sound, singing voice part, voice position, rhythm processing and body posture in the early 17th century Italian song from the theoretical perspective of the "authentic performance" rising in the sixties of the last century, aiming to find a specific performance style from history and produce certain guiding significance for the current vocal music teaching or for singers provide a choice.

## 1. Interpretation of Theoretical Perspective

Italian songs from the 17th to the 18th century seem to be a collection of concepts, which include the monologues from the early 17th century to the aria selection of opera in the late 18th century in the current context of vocal music teaching in China <sup>[1]</sup>. However, this collection of concepts with a long time span, many types of songs and many styles leads to one of the current cognition and teaching. Some misunderstandings, such as the relevant articles published in various music journals in recent years, focus on the social and cultural background at that time and the resulting song style, the articulation of words, the method of vocalization, why these songs are suitable for basic training and other issues. Although these issues need to be concerned in singing, such research in Teaching. There is no practical guiding role in the performance of "and", because the specific techniques vary from person to person, and such problems are also problems that need to be paid attention to in all periods of opera singing, so they are not special and representative, but the two century old style "in a word" is misleading, instead, it is the rich style of Italian songs and its development and change achievements in history. The Italian School of vocal music. Therefore, the author believes that the singing style of Italian songs from the 17th to the 18th century must be distinguished according to the specific period and genre, and the singing techniques also need to derive from the specific style, so as to fully display the multiple beauty of Italian vocal music works.

In this paper, the singing style of monophonic songs is taken as a representative case, and literature is taken as the basis to restore the historical performing style, that is, the so-called "authentic performance" in the title <sup>[2]</sup>. True performance is a problem of Performing Aesthetics in the current academic context. Different from the true performance of instrumental music with organic objects, the reducibility of vocal authentic performance is lower, because the voice at that time could not be preserved, so vocal authentic performance can only find the ancient echo from the literature. Therefore, the "authentic performance" of this paper is more a historical perspective than an absolute, specific or systematic theoretical framework. The author intends to find a specific performance style from history and produce certain guiding significance for the current performance and vocal music teaching.

## 2. Singing Style and Skills of New Music

The new music was published in Florence by caccini in 1602, which is a collection of single songs accompanied by harmonic instruments. At the beginning, caccini expressed that the purpose of this song collection is to clearly convey the syllables and semantics of the lyrics with music - "speech with pitch", which is undoubtedly a pioneer creation in the era of polyphonic vocal music. The ultimate purpose of monophonic songs is to convey the type of emotion with music. The Italian songs of the 17th century were not only sung by professional singers, but also popular among lovers

and nobles <sup>[3]</sup>. The foreword of caccini is more for the guidance of professional singers. In his opinion, intonation is the most important foundation of professional singing. There were two ways to find the right starting tone and form a singing style at that time: the first tone of the song was three degrees lower than the actual recording score; it was an elegant singing way to sing the recording score pitch from weak to strong. Kaccini "developed" a third way, that is, to get emotional in the first tone in a weaker way rather than a stronger way, even if "exclamation" is the first way to get emotional. From this point of view, the trend of change in intensity had no fixed form in the singing of songs at that time. They relied more on the singer's habits, but the criteria for judging the merits and demerits were the rationality of the layout of intensity change in the works and the effectiveness of emotional communication.

In the way of decorative singing, caccini also made a clearer discussion. He believed that decorative singing can bring different effects to the "unchanging" notation. The decoration effect mainly depends on the singer's impromptu trill singing, which is often not marked on the spectrum. There are two kinds of trills, the first is homophonic trill, the second is adjacent trill. According to the music score example given by caccini, the singing of the two trills needs to issue a quarter note first, then repeat the vowel a in the throat until the last short note <sup>[4]</sup>. That is to say, when encountering a long sound, the singer needs to modify it with trill rather than sing the long sound mechanically. When encountering a long sound that needs to be handled with subtlety, it is the best way to sing with vowel voice, which is the guarantee of relaxed, clear and flexible display skills. The importance of vibrato decoration is very important for Kaccini, because they are the means to express the delicate emotional level, and even the standard to measure the singing technique.

In addition to the vibrato decoration, we can also adopt the decoration of punctuation, that is, singing two octaves into octaves and sixteenth notes, while the first octave can also be performed with vibrato, and the best of these decorative singing is also in the throat. This kind of treatment was considered to be gorgeous and elegant at that time, among which it is not difficult to see the origin of the colorful and dazzling techniques that were flooded in the aria of Italian opera later. Kaccini then demonstrated how to add decoration to the performance of the pastoral "ah, where they have gone", in which the trill processing is basically the same as the above-mentioned, which appears on the long sound. What's more noteworthy is that in just the first six sections, he has seven times prompted the processing of singing in the form of words, including both the term of "Trill" and the dynamic solution of "soft and weakening voice" Interpretation, this extremely delicate mark undoubtedly shows us the way and handling of singing in the 17th century in a relatively real and "silent" way. Therefore, the author chooses three examples to imitate the way of caccini's most famous work "amarelli" to record the decorative singing, in order to show the historical singing way more clearly.

At the end of the preface, kaccini talked about the breath in singing. In his opinion, breath is the backing of good voice, and the use of breath must be timely and appropriate. When a singer sings with musical instruments (at that time, it was mainly lute and other string instruments), he must choose a suitable sound area to sing (that is, the tonality in modern cognition). Only in this way can he produce a full and natural voice, not a falsetto <sup>[5]</sup>. Kaccini's speech was put forward in the specific period when castrated singers appeared and gradually prevailed in the 17th century. The trend of showing off skills gradually prevailed, which led many singers to deliberately improve the vocal area display techniques and thus produce the "harsh" sound. It can be imagined that what kaccini accused was the act of sacrificing natural voice for showing off skills. The standard of good breath control is to be able to easily strengthen, weaken or marvel, that is to say, to perform the above decorative singing evenly and smoothly. It's not hard to see from this instructive article of caccini that neutralization and calmness are the aesthetic standards he pursues, and all techniques and works handling should come out from this, which is of great significance for us to re understand the singing style of the 17th century and the training standard selection in the vocal music teaching today.

### **3. Singing Voice Position**

In the 17th century, the modern notation has not been completely established, so when we read the music score of that period, we can only determine the classification of the actor's sound area or the accompaniment instrument according to the score written by the composer. In Italy in the 17th century, The Sopranos were most popular, especially the famous singers at that time, most of them were sopranos <sup>[6]</sup>. When many composers thought that the bass concert lost its gorgeous and solemn characteristics, cacini also thought that the bass area was not as emotional as the soprano area. At that time, the public's preference for the singer's voice actually reflected the specific aesthetic standards of the 17th century. It is obvious that the bright and light voice color was generally recognized by the society at that time. In the preface of the new music, it is not difficult to find that kaccini repeatedly emphasized the location of the "throat", rather than the "head cavity" currently emphasized. The voice of the throat will inevitably weaken resonance and reduce resonance Less overtones and a direct reduction in volume. In fact, compared with the style of vocal music in the second half of the 18th century and the 19th century, this is one of the characteristics of vocal music in the 17th century, or even the whole Baroque period.

### **4. Performing Form**

Among the new features of "new music" in the 17th century, the priority of lyrics is undoubtedly the most influential one for later generations. This kind of monophonic music style and the singing style of early opera are more of a narrative style. At that time, the real narrative and aria have not appeared. At that time, it was considered as one of the standards to measure the singer's level whether he could properly grasp and deal with the relatively free rhythm. In the preface, cachini also mentioned the problem of free singing. He gave an example to deal with the problem of free singing, which can appear when a string of octave notes or sixteenth notes go through complex harmony, in order to clearly express the meaning of syllables and lyrics, and the harmony changes At that time, it often represents the subtle change of song emotion. At this time, the treatment of rhythm liberalization can undoubtedly express with the help of instrumental music. In my opinion, it is necessary to reintroduce the narration style of the 17th century into the songs of this period. This is the training of how to express the emotion of the works by "speaking and singing", and also the requirement of distinguishing the styles of the works of different periods in the teaching practice of vocal music.

### **5. Aesthetic Standard of Italian Singing Style**

"Intensity" or "Drama" is the most important aesthetic standard in Italian music in the 17th century and even in the future. The so-called embodiment of drama in songs is actually the emotional tension produced by the expression of strength and strength in combination with the lyric text, which needs to be realized more by the voice of the people in the 17th century when the expression, strength marking system and instrument manufacturing are not yet mature. The drama of the 17th century cannot be compared with the drama in the current cognition. The "nobility" and "elegance" that cachini often mentioned were the common aesthetic standards at that time. Even if he emphasized the decorative singing, he also needed to understand that this kind of behavior with dazzling technical color also needed moderate, moderate rather than exaggerated show off, and the timbre of these parts did not need to be too bright or gorgeous, It is the general aesthetic standard and vocal music teaching basis in this period that simplicity contains nobility. In addition, the word "sweet" was also an aesthetic dimension that many composers and theorists paid great attention to at that time, which more involved the timbre level. The light and transparent feminine timbre was the ideal paradigm at that time. On the one hand, it adapted to the lyric and entertainment characteristics of songs as indoor music, and on the other hand, it formed a plucked string or plucked string accompaniment instrument with weak volume and fine timbre Tacit cooperation.

Therefore, even in the context that any part of the music can be performed and accompaniment instruments can be replaced by piano, whether we can get close to and draw lessons from this historical performance mode and aesthetic standard in a timely and appropriate way so as to distinguish Italian classical songs from the artistic songs in the 19th century system more clearly, the author thinks that this is a good way to measure singers and vocal music education. The level of art guidance in learning is very important.

## **6. Problems of Vocal Music Teaching**

Compared with Baroque's attention to the harmonious beauty of "multiple voices", Italian songs in the 17th century focused on the characteristics of individual voice, which is the source of the Italian School of Bel Canto's attention to techniques and performance styles, and also the reason why Italian songs are still in the core position in the training of basic skills of vocal music, not mentioned in many current studies "Vowels are suitable for vocalization and emotional expression" and other surface phenomena. Only when we really understand how the techniques are close to the writing of music itself in the words of the ancients, can we reasonably find the way of expression from the level of both aesthetics and techniques. On the one hand, the guiding significance of the authentic performance lies in the performance, that is to say, it is one of the singers' singing accomplishment to distinguish the works of different periods and different genres in the performance style, which needs to be formed on the basis of understanding the history; connected with this, the authentic performance can also be used as one of the courses of skill training in the daily vocal music teaching, so-called vocal music skill training not only needs to be aimed at "beautiful voice", it is also necessary to help singers establish "beautiful voice under historical concept".

## **7. Conclusion**

The time has passed for four centuries now. Western vocal music art has developed into various styles after several centuries. One of the tasks of vocal music teaching and singers is to show the diversity of musical art through performance. Therefore, how to walk and create in a "framework" and how to balance the past and the present has become an urgent question for vocal music teaching and every singer to think about. This is the reason and significance of the author's attempt to restore the singing style of Italian songs in the 17th century - specifically, the singing close to that historical style compared to the present - and provide a reference model for the vocal music teaching and singers.

## **Acknowledgements**

Research backbone support project of Heihe University.

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