



ARIA OF THOUGHT: PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION THROUGH THE EXPRESSION OF VOCAL MUSIC

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Abstract: Philosophy significantly contributes to the inheritance of human thought and the humanistic spirit. Traditional explorations in philosophy, often rational and abstract, may struggle to engage deeply with human emotions and experiences. This article delves into the expression of philosophical ideas through vocal music, particularly during the Romantic era, to bridge this gap. By examining the integration of philosophical concepts into 19th-century vocal compositions, the study highlights how vocal music can serve as a potent medium for philosophical discourse. It explores the symbiotic relationship between vocal music and philosophy, analyzing how arias express and pursue philosophical inquiries. This research evaluates the role of vocal music in philosophical exploration through three dimensions: emotional expression, conceptual communication and inspirational impact. The findings aim to demonstrate the transformative power of music to convey philosophical thoughts, inspiring deeper contemplation of life, existence and values, and encouraging a reevaluation of the unique capacity of vocal music to communicate profound ideas.


Keywords: Vocal Expression. Philosophical Thought. Emotional Resonance. The Human Spiritual World. Musical Form.

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Resumo: A filosofia contribui significativamente para a herança do pensamento humano e do espírito humanista. As explorações tradicionais da filosofia, geralmente racionais e abstratas, podem ter dificuldade em se envolver profundamente com as emoções e experiências humanas. Este artigo investiga a expressão de ideias filosóficas, por meio da música vocal, especialmente durante a era romântica, para preencher essa lacuna. Ao examinar a integração de conceitos filosóficos, nas composições vocais do século XIX, o estudo destaca como a música vocal pode servir como um meio potente para o discurso filosófico. O estudo explora a relação simbiótica entre a música vocal e a filosofia, analisando como as árias expressam e perseguem questionamentos filosóficos. Esta pesquisa avalia o papel da música vocal na exploração filosófica, através de três dimensões: expressão emocional, comunicação conceitual e impacto inspirador. As descobertas visam a demonstrar o poder transformador da música, para transmitir pensamentos filosóficos, inspirando uma contemplação mais profunda da vida, da existência e dos valores, além de incentivar uma reavaliação da capacidade única da música vocal de comunicar ideias profundas.

Palavras-chave: Expressão Vocal. Pensamento Filosófico. Ressonância Emocional. Mundo Espiritual Humano. Forma Musical.

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ARIA OF THOUGHT: PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION THROUGH THE EXPRESSION OF VOCAL MUSIC

Jie Sun¹

Abstract: Philosophy significantly contributes to the inheritance of human thought and the humanistic spirit. Traditional explorations in philosophy, often rational and abstract, may struggle to engage deeply with human emotions and experiences. This article delves into the expression of philosophical ideas through vocal music, particularly during the Romantic era, to bridge this gap. By examining the integration of philosophical concepts into 19th-century vocal compositions, the study highlights how vocal music can serve as a potent medium for philosophical discourse. It explores the symbiotic relationship between vocal music and philosophy, analyzing how arias express and pursue philosophical inquiries. This research evaluates the role of vocal music in philosophical exploration through three dimensions: emotional expression, conceptual communication and inspirational impact. The findings aim to demonstrate the transformative power of music to convey philosophical thoughts, inspiring deeper contemplation of life, existence and values, and encouraging a reevaluation of the unique capacity of vocal music to communicate profound ideas.

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophy fundamentally shapes societal development and personal growth by fostering deep reflections on reality and human values, as noted by Grimm (2021, p. 236). Vocal music, with its emotive melodies and poignant lyrics, serves as a unique medium for expressing such philosophical ideas, effectively bridging the gap between art and intellectual inquiry (Vargas, 2020, p. 391). This article explores how vocal music, through its composition, vocal delivery and lyrical content, acts as a conduit for philosophical thought, engaging audiences in introspection and enhancing understanding of life's essence and meaning. The research aims to illuminate the interplay between vocal music and philosophy, highlighting how this art form enriches human culture, fosters diversity of thought, and contributes to personal and societal advancement.

Vocal music, as highlighted by scholars like Yang (2018, p. 76), Jia (2018, p. 190), Wu (2023, p. 94), Luo (2019, p. 72), Hua and Liu (2019, p. 228), is a crucial component of modern music art and an embodiment of traditional culture that expresses deep emotions and philosophical thoughts through melody and performance. It transcends mere auditory

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art by requiring performers to not only possess musical skills, but also the ability to vividly convey emotions, acting as the second creators who reinterpret works with fidelity to their original essence. This form of expression offers a unique avenue for exploring and reflecting on life's profound questions, making it an invaluable tool for both personal growth and artistic exploration. Yang and Yi (2021, p. 109) highlight the importance of unique educational goals and quality improvement, noting that, while many studies explore philosophical ideas in vocal expression, few ones examine the specific tools and methods used in this exploration.

Vocal music transcends mere auditory pleasure, serving as a profound medium for philosophical inquiry and the expression of human emotions. By weaving lyrics and melody into a rich tapestry of symbols, it evokes deep emotional resonance and introspection. This article examines how vocal music not only articulates philosophical ideas, but also deepens our understanding of human existence. Philosophy, in this context, is understood as the study of fundamental questions about life, reality and existence, while vocal expression in music refers to the use of voice to convey complex emotional and philosophical narratives. Through its emotional depth and inspirational power, vocal music invites listeners to engage with life's complexities, enriching our grasp of human thought, culture and the very essence of being.

1 VOCAL MUSIC EXPRESSION AND PHILOSOPHY

1.1 THE VOCAL EXPRESSION CHARACTERISTICS OF ARIA

Vocal music is an art form that conveys emotions through the singer's voice, utilizing aspects, such as timbre, pitch and volume. For instance, in 'Nessun Dorma' from Puccini's 'Turandot,' the tenor's powerful voice expresses the character's determination and hope, evoking a strong emotional response from the audience.

Vocal music expression refers to the secondary creation of vocal music works, with the theme of showcasing the emotional characteristics of the works and conveying one's own experiences and feelings (Zhang, 2019, p. 65). In vocal music expression, it is essential to preserve the original intention of the work while adapting it to fit real-life expressive needs. Aria, a form of vocal music, blends performance and singing to convey emotions through sound, form and eye contact. This achieves a harmonious fusion of external presentation and internal allure, where singers interpret the character traits and emotions embedded within the music. Through vocal music expression, the characters' external image and internal characteristics can be fully displayed. At the same time, vocal music has a delicate and gentle tone that can clearly highlight the characters' emotional characteristics (Kang; Scholp; Jiang et al. 2018, p. 392). Vocal expression mainly includes emotional expression, textual interpretation, vocal techniques, as well as performance and stage performance.

(1) Emotional expression: Vocal music is an art form where singers express emotions through voice modulation, conveying feelings, like sadness, joy, or anger, to deeply resonate with listeners.

(2) Text interpretation: In vocal music, singers convey song meanings through their interpretation of lyrics, emphasizing key messages with rhythm, stress and tone to express themes and emotions effectively.

(3) Sound Skills: Vocal expression relies on singers' skills in technique, intonation and timbre, using techniques, like breathing and enunciation, to enhance clarity, softness and intensity for greater expressive impact in performance.

(4) Performance and Stage Performance: Vocal expression encompasses more than just sound—it also involves singers' stage presence, including body language, facial expressions and movements, all crucial for conveying emotions and meaning. Through dynamic stage performances, singers vividly interpret songs, captivating their audience's attention.

An aria is a captivating musical form, typically a solo performance found in operas, which emphasizes lyricism and emotional expression. This form pairs poetic lyrics with rich melodies to convey deep emotions, thoughts, or narratives, effectively showcasing the singer's vocal prowess and interpretive skills. Often accompanied by an orchestra, arias are a pinnacle of expressive vocal music, allowing performers to explore a range of emotional nuances and dramatic intensity.

In modern times, especially among the younger generation in China, there has been a fascinating evolution in how music, including arias, is used as a medium of expression. Today's young artists are increasingly integrating cutting-edge technologies into their musical creations. For instance, the use of social media platforms, streaming services and sophisticated music production software has revolutionized how music is produced, distributed, and consumed. These platforms not only facilitate a wider dissemination of musical works, but also enable a vibrant interaction between artists and their audiences. The integration of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) into performances can transform traditional arias into immersive experiences, blurring the lines between the digital and the physical worlds, and creating new forms of artistic expression. This digital revolution is expanding the possibilities for how arias and other forms of music can be experienced, making them more accessible and engaging for a global audience.

“The Unbelievable Sunny” is a famous aria in the Italian opera *Turandot*, by Puccini, and it is also one of the well-known “Three Famous Sections”. This song has a beautiful melody, full of endless passion and mysterious charm of love. Compared with other monotonous forms of vocal music, aria has a stronger emotional color in vocal music. It can better express the characters' emotions and also requires higher musical skills from singers

(Keefe, 2008, p. 45). As a structurally complete lyrical solo theme, its melody and tone not only provide actors with ample performance space, but also combine the lyrics to gradually convey the main characters' inner emotions. It is similar to the long singing style in drama and can promote the characters' emotional development in the work during singing.

In vocal music expression, there are also high standards and requirements for the accompaniment and form of the aria. For example, the accompaniment of an aria typically uses both single and multi-voice parts, accompanied by a beautiful theme music, to express the singer's emotions. From the perspective of storyline and character traits, aria can be divided into three categories: lyrical, narrative and conflicting (Anson-Cartwright, 2018, p. 271). Aria, a solo singing form often found at the climax of vocal works, deeply expresses characters' emotions through singers' exceptional skills. It demands artistic expression, blending stage presence, singing prowess and musical understanding for emotional unity. Mastery of opera arias—whether Western or Eastern—requires singers to grasp the storyline of opera. They use lyrics, rhythm and melody to convey characters' complex emotions, resolving conflicts to convey emotional essence of vocal works. This involves using voice strength and color changes to impeccably portray characters' inner worlds.

1.2 THE MEANING AND VIEWPOINT OF PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy integrates nature, society and thought into a unified worldview and methodology, exploring the world's origin, essence and development through practice and knowledge. Materialism focuses on objective matter, while idealism emphasizes consciousness and thought, using abstract concepts to understand the essential characteristics and connections in phenomena. At the philosophical level, there exists not only an objective practical relationship between humans and nature, but also a cognitive and aesthetic relationship. Human is the unity of natural and social things. The irrational components in human consciousness activities, including emotions, habits, willpower and other factors, are determined by human nature. The ideal components of human consciousness, including thinking, logic and other factors, are determined by human social practice activities. Human behavior has its own material boundaries, premises and conditions, which are beyond the individual's control. At any time, consciousness can only be a perceived existence, and human survival is the human life's activity. Human understanding of philosophy is accumulated through the rational factors of history. Looking at the world, from a philosophical and rational perspective, can help individuals grasp the essence and laws of objective things under various complex appearances, which belongs to the unique perspective of philosophy. Essentially, philosophy is a cosmic life's dialectical exploration. The universe is infinite in nature, but life is limited. From limited life to an endless universe, it contains a philosophical pursuit of truth and wisdom.

In vocal performance, philosophy can express emotions and thoughts through lyrics, music and performance methods. Lyrics can convey profound philosophical ideas and explore themes, such as human existence, love, death and freedom. Music expresses emotions through elements, such as melody, harmony and rhythm, triggering resonance and emotional resonance among the audience. The performance methods include the singer's voice, facial expressions, actions, etc., which can further convey the emotions and thoughts in the song.

Vocal performance serves as a dynamic bridge between philosophical ideas and their artistic expression, transforming abstract concepts into emotionally charged musical experiences. This form of art not only entertains, but also educates and provokes thought, allowing listeners to explore deeper meanings and the life's value through song.

In the modern era, the fusion of visual arts and music, particularly through music videos and short viral content, has redefined how music and philosophy are communicated to the public. These visual elements are not merely aesthetic enhancements. They play a critical role in how messages are perceived and received by audiences, especially the younger generation.

Music videos, for example, combine storytelling, visual effects and musical performance to create compelling narratives that resonate on multiple sensory levels. The visual component often amplifies the underlying message of the music, making complex or abstract philosophical concepts more accessible and relatable. These videos can quickly become viral, spreading through social media and other digital platforms, thereby reaching a vast audience with considerable speed and efficiency.

Similarly, short-form viral content, like those found on platforms, such as TikTok or Instagram, leverages the power of visual attraction and succinct messaging to engage viewers. These snippets of content often use catchy music combined with striking visuals to capture attention and convey messages succinctly. For music educators and the music industry, these platforms present both opportunities and challenges in conveying philosophical ideas and guiding thoughts to younger audiences.

The challenge lies in the brevity of medium and the need for immediate engagement. Educators and artists must distill complex ideas into concise, engaging formats without oversimplifying or diluting the philosophical depth. This requires not only creativity in the production and delivery of content, but also a deep understanding of the audience's cultural and cognitive contexts.

Understanding and leveraging these modern visual and musical art forms can lead to a deeper connection with younger audiences, enabling a more effective transmission of philosophical ideas and enriching the cultural dialogue. Through these mediums, music educators and industry professionals can explore new ways to engage, educate and inspire,

ultimately fostering a more profound appreciation of both music and philosophy in contemporary society.

2 PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATIONS BASED ON VOCAL MUSIC EXPRESSION

2.1 INTERNAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VOCAL MUSIC AND PHILOSOPHY

Throughout human civilization, philosophy and art have maintained a close relationship. Philosophy influences art through cognitive and aesthetic lenses, while art embodies philosophical concepts in practice. Philosophy abstracts the characteristics of vocal music art and guides aesthetic thinking. Werry (2018, p. 1) notes that the singing style in ‘Figaro’s Wedding,’ particularly in its arias, exemplifies a humanistic spirit of literature and art, representing an effective integration of philosophy and vocal art. Vocal music expression is a form of transmission of vocal music art, which belongs to a main activity of transmitting vocal music artistic ideas. From both theoretical and practical perspectives, vocal music expression is a concrete manifestation of philosophical thought, and philosophical thought is the source of vocal music expression. The interweaving of vocal music and philosophy is mainly reflected in three aspects: exploring the inner world, seeking universal truth and inquiring about the life’s meaning.

“Vocal music art explores people’s inner world and touches their hearts by expressing their emotions, thereby achieving emotional resonance” (Xu, 2021, p. 123). This is consistent with the internal world pursued by philosophy. Among them, many philosophical issues are centered around human emotions, will and consciousness. Vocal music expression and philosophical concepts are both explorations of the human inner world’s emotional essence.

“Philosophy mainly uses abstract concepts and logical thinking to seek the universal truth of the universe and social life” (Li, 2020, p. 26). Vocal music art also pursues a universal truth at the emotional level with its own unique way of expression. In this regard, vocal music and philosophy are common, and this universal truth can often transcend different cultures, eras, and resonate differently in different individual objects. “For example, the Ninth Symphony, with its solemn and stirring aria, expresses contemplation on the universal truth of human destiny” (Zieg, 2022, p. 73). In his Ninth Symphony, Beethoven used a choir to elevate the music from individual emotions to collective expression, highlighting the significance of shared human experience and destiny. This collective expression reflects faith in humanity’s wisdom and power. The choir’s solemnity and generosity inspire audiences, fostering a sense of unity and friendship. The structure and development of symphony also reflect on humanity’s fate and universal truth. Beethoven’s rich musical techniques and thematic variations portray the highs and lows of human history, prompting reflection on the meaning and truth of human existence.

Philosophy has always been a question about the life's meaning. Thinking about problems from a philosophical perspective helps individuals understand the life's true meaning and find the direction of it. At the same time, many vocal music works also convey inquiries about the life's true meaning through their specific expressions.

Vocal music, akin to philosophy, deeply explores the inner world and seeks universal truths, resonating with listeners on profound emotional levels. It delves into human emotions, will and consciousness, mirroring the philosophical exploration of life's essence. For instance, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony uses a choir to elevate the music from personal to collective emotional expression, contemplating human destiny and the universal truths that transcend cultural and temporal boundaries. The symphony inspires listeners with its themes of unity and friendship, reflecting on shared human experiences and the significance of collective wisdom.

Moreover, the evolution of vocal music, especially with Western influences, has broadened its expressive range and appeal, making it increasingly accessible to contemporary audiences. This cross-cultural adaptation has allowed vocal music to engage effectively with global audiences, facilitating a dialogue about life's deeper meanings. By integrating traditional and modern elements, vocal music serves as a vital tool for philosophical inquiry, resonating with young and old audiences, and enhancing its role in exploring and expressing the universal questions of human existence. This dynamic interplay between music and philosophy helps listeners navigate the life's complexities, providing a deeper understanding and connection to the universal human experience.

Vocal expression of philosophical ideas is not only reflected in the depth and connotation of lyrics, but also in the emotional expression of music, the performance of singers and the audience's resonance. Through these methods, a vivid and profound philosophical picture is jointly constructed. When the audience can feel the emotions expressed in vocal music and understand the ideas behind it, the philosophical ideas expressed in vocal music can truly touch people's hearts and trigger profound thinking about life, value and meaning. It is not only an art form, but also a medium for conveying ideas and emotions, which can inspire people to explore philosophical issues.

2.2 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION IN VOCAL MUSIC EXPRESSION

2.2.1 CONTRADICTIONS IN VOCAL MUSIC EXPRESSION

The idea of opposition and unity is an important viewpoint in the philosophy of dialectical materialism. It reveals the relativity between objective and concrete things, and demonstrates the complexity of the development of things and the reasons for promoting their sustainable development. "It also uses contradiction analysis to help people understand

and grasp the changes and development of the world” (Xu, 2020, p. 75). The essential characteristic of contradiction is the unity of opposites. “At the philosophical level, contradictions reflect the opposite and unified aspects of things, which are the driving force and inevitable phenomenon of their development” (Wang, 2018, p. 39). In vocal music expression, contradictions always exist, and the most prominent one is the contradiction between emotions and techniques. For example, in a complete aria opera work, there are both passionate and gentle parts, expressing the protagonist’s complexity and conflicting emotions through the unity of opposing elements. In the classic aria “Sembre libera” of the opera *La Traviata*, the performer vividly expresses opposing emotions and thoughts through changes in voice, emotional expression and performance. In its climax, the performer expresses their pursuit of freedom and happiness with a more passionate voice, demonstrating the conflict and tension of opposing emotions. In the gentle part, the performer expresses their understanding and tolerance towards social norms and constraints with a soft and delicate voice, demonstrating the unity and harmony of opposing emotions.

In vocal music, emotional expression and singing skills are dialectically unified, complementing and promoting each other. Vocal music aims to convey emotions, with singing skills being fundamental. Without emotional expression, these skills lose their value. If a singer focuses solely on technical perfection, their performance suffers. Thus, while precision in sound quality and breath control is essential, the emotional value in vocal music must also be emphasized. Singing techniques alone do not capture the vocal music creators’ inspiration and intent. The unified presentation of emotions and techniques by singers constitutes a second creation of the work, reflecting the philosophy of opposition and unity.

Vision also plays a crucial role in vocal expression. Visual elements, such as music videos, can enhance the effectiveness of music dissemination, allowing listeners to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of music. Modern music videos enhance vocal expression through exquisite imagery, stage design and special effects, enhancing emotional expression and allowing audiences to more intuitively experience the emotional connotations of music. However, this visual impact also brings some challenges. Modern music videos and short viral content often win popularity through visual appeal, leading to the marginalization of people’s deep understanding and appreciation of music itself. The younger generation is more susceptible to the influence of visual appeal rather than delving deeply into the philosophical meaning behind music. Therefore, in teaching or learning, it is necessary to base it on the idea of opposition and unity, combine visual elements and music content, and deeply consider the philosophy and ideas conveyed by music at the level of attracting young people’s interest in vocal music.

2.2.2 COMPLETENESS IN VOCAL MUSIC EXPRESSION

The so-called whole refers to the total of all things. In the form of quantity, the whole represents one. Parts are all aspects of a thing, that is, the parts of a thing. In terms of quantity, parts represent many. The whole of a thing is composed of parts. And, without parts, the whole does not exist. A part is a part of the whole. Without the whole, a part is no longer a part of that whole. The two influence and interact with each other, that is, the functional state and changes of a part may lead to changes in the overall functional state (Liu, 2021, p. 141). Similarly, the overall functional status and changes also have an impact on some parts.

The expression of vocal music fully utilizes the principles of overall and local differentiation. For example, in choral works, the harmony, melody and rhythm of each voice are independent and important parts, but they need to be integrated into each other as a whole to present a magnificent musical scene. "Ode to the Lamb" is a typical choral piece used to express praise and prayer for the Lamb of God in Christian faith. This piece embodies both complete and partial philosophical ideas in music. The completeness is reflected in the entire choir, with lyrics and melody revolving around the praise of the lamb, expressing a complete and perfect reverence and praise for the sacred things. And some are reflected in the variations of different paragraphs and voices in the repertoire, each with different melodies and emotional expressions, but all revolve around the praise of the lamb, demonstrating the unity and coordination of completeness and parts. If a singer wants to present a complete vocal music work, they not only need to have a certain understanding of the lyrics, melody, rhythm, etc. of the work, but also analyze the theme and emotional tone of the vocal music work based on their own cognition. These details all have an impact on the completeness of the expressive effect of the vocal music work to a certain extent. In vocal music expression, the integrity of a work is inseparable from its parts. On the contrary, the parts of the work, including the lyrics, rhythm, melody and other factors that make up the complete work, also have an impact on the overall work. Even in vocal music works with strong technical skills, the expression level of important parts plays a crucial role and influence on the overall effect of the work.

2.2.3 MATERIALITY AND SPIRITUALITY IN VOCAL MUSIC EXPRESSION

"From a philosophical macro perspective, matter is the origin of the universe" (Qiu; Wang, 2019, p. 20). "Starting from Marx's understanding of materiality, matter is an object that exists independently of human perception, although it is human perception" (Chen, 2020, p. 12). It is a philosophical category, a symbol of objective reality, and something that people use their senses to understand. Simply put, matter determines consciousness, which,

in turn, affects matter. Matter is an independent existence that can be reflected by human consciousness. For vocal music art, the expression process of vocal music reflects a human aesthetic consciousness. The reason why it can span a long historical time and space, become a unique spiritual and cultural phenomenon in human society, and maintain its vitality is largely because the artistic beauty, displayed by vocal music art, can penetrate into the human soul and integrate into the human spirit. In these works, the profound charm is not only the flow of sound, but also the continuation of human material activities.

Vocal music art carries strong spiritual significance and is reflected, in various forms, in vocal music expression and practical activities. Taking the classic aria “Nessun Dorma” from the opera *Turandot* as an example, this piece embodies the philosophical ideas of material and spirit in music. Materiality is reflected in the lyrics and melody, expressing the pursuit and commitment to love and desire in the material world, and demonstrating the desire and pursuit of material life. The spirit is reflected in the emotions and expressions in the repertoire, through singing and performance, expressing the pursuit and commitment to love and faith in the spiritual world, and demonstrating the pursuit and cherish of the spiritual realm. Firstly, from the perspective of the entire process of vocal music artistic creation, human singing is a process of ideological participation. The expression of vocal music is achieved through various parts of the body as material carriers, which is the manifestation of the artistic beauty of vocal music. Among these factors, human beings, as the main body in the process of vocal music creation, exhibit a psychological state that is also achieved through material carriers, which is a process with multiple interactive effects. For example, the emotional transmission of vocal music works, the regulation of senses and the understanding of singing content are not completely dependent on these psychological activities. They are based on material objects, and the spiritual activity process of vocal music expression subjects is the result of human brain functional movements. In terms of its spiritual attributes, vocal music art also has some form of expression. Among them, multidimensional interweaving is an important morphological feature of vocal music expression, which fully reflects the logical nature of dialectics. For example, vocal music art is a type of auditory art that expresses itself through the singer’s voice. In order to enhance their auditory artistic effect, singers usually shape their external image during the performance process to make their performance more in line with the theme. In actual performance, this external image can be integrated with elements, such as vocal music melody and lyrics, becoming a visual expression of vocal music art. For example, singers express emotions and meanings through the material characteristics of their voice, such as timbre, pitch and volume, while also conveying inner emotions and thoughts through spiritual expression, such as understanding and interpreting lyrics.

The philosophical ideas of opposition and unity, whole and part, material and spirit in vocal expression provide rich connotations and profound meanings for vocal art. Through vocal expression, artists can integrate these philosophical ideas into music, achieving

a comprehensive exploration of human emotions, spiritual world and meaning of existence. These philosophical reflections have made significant contributions to the comprehensive exploration of philosophical ideas through vocal music, enriching people's understanding and appreciation of music art.

2.3 VOCAL MUSIC AS A TOOL FOR PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION

2.3.1 EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IN VOCAL MUSIC

“Philosophy is the most profound exploration of human existence and consciousness, which ultimately is a supreme wisdom” (Wu, 2020, p. 91). The power of knowledge comes from wisdom. Knowledge is limited and relative, while philosophical wisdom is infinite and absolute. Moving from knowledge to wisdom involves grasping the absolute from the relative and seeing the infinite from the finite. In vocal music, emotional expression mirrors this process. Emotion reflects a subjective attitude towards understanding the objective world. Since everyone's experiences are limited, performers in vocal music cannot fully experience the emotions in every work.

Therefore, singers often use various methods to enrich their emotional cognition and understanding, and express this understanding of the emotions in the work through singing. Every vocal music work has its own emotional framework. The singer can extract the emotional elements contained in the work from the structure. The exploration of emotional elements in a work is carried out from the aspects of the meaning and connotation of the words of song and music. To analyze vocal music works, one must first understand the meaning expressed in the lyrics and the artistic conception of the song. In this way, when expressing vocal music, one can accurately reproduce the artistic image of the work based on the characteristics of the scene described in the lyrics and the protagonist's emotional changes. The variation of tone is a method of emotional expression in vocal music, which can make people immerse themselves and resonate with the soul. The lyrics and melody in the song are harmonious, guiding the lyricism of the song, while the song further deepens the emotions expressed in it. In the famous opera *Carmen*, the female protagonist Carmen sings her liberal ideas in a passionate noise. In this famous aria, Carmen expresses her passion for life, pursuit of freedom and rebellion against traditional norms. Her voice is full of power and passion, showcasing her unwavering beliefs and unshakable personality. Through the performance of this song, the audience can feel Carmen's emotional expression is so strong and profound, while also reflecting on their own views on freedom, ideals and tradition. The ability of this kind of vocal music, as a philosophical exploration tool, enables the audience to gain a deeper understanding of human emotions and rationality while enjoying music. Therefore, the singer serves as both a commentator for vocal music works and a disseminator of philosophy. In vocal music, the singer deeply comprehends the emotions contained in the

work, which triggers their own and the audience's profound reflection on the philosophy contained in vocal music.

2.3.2 CONCEPTUAL COMMUNICATION OF VOCAL MUSIC

Philosophy is a highly abstract and in-depth exploration of human thought, aimed at understanding and answering questions about life, consciousness, knowledge, morality and values. Although philosophy aims to seek truth and wisdom, due to the diversity and branching nature of its disciplines, its problems often involve abstract logical thinking, which is highly complex. Vocal music expression is composed of lyrics, musical elements and performance techniques, which can express the complex and abstract logical thinking of philosophy through concrete concepts.

Lyrics, as one of the most intuitive forms of vocal music, can convey certain thoughts and concepts through the selection, arrangement, and meaning creation of words and phrases (Zhang; Wang; Zhou *et al.*, 2018, p. 1346). In the song *Imagine*, John Lennon conveys the philosophical ideas of peace, equality and an ideal society through the lyrics. The lyrics directly express criticism of the current social situation and longing for an ideal society, making this song a profound and inspiring work that triggers people's thinking and exploration of social reality and ideal future. In vocal music expression, singers can use vocal music singing techniques to highlight key points (Nie, 2018, p. 149). By using lyrics and singing techniques, the audience can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the philosophy contained in the song. The musical elements, in vocal music works, mainly include melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, etc. (Meng; Wang; Yu *et al.*, 2021, p. 59). In actual singing, the singer plays a unique role in vocal music expression through the application of various musical elements, presenting a rich concept of the work and fully expressing philosophical ideas and viewpoints. For example, sad and gentle melodies can express a kind of life contemplation, while clear and fast melodies can express a positive attitude towards life and the pursuit of happiness. In vocal music expression, singers use their own methods to fully convey the concept of vocal music by changing their voice, adjusting their posture and shaping their external image.

An aria, a distinct form of vocal music, serves as a medium for performers to express deep emotional nuances and explore complex characters through its melding of melody and lyrics. Aria showcases the profound ability of music to delve into an individual's innermost feelings and philosophical contemplations. Through the nuanced delivery of these pieces, singers can embody and convey intricate philosophical ideas, thereby enriching the audience's emotional and intellectual engagement with broader existential themes.

Moreover, the interpretation of arias involves sophisticated vocal techniques and emotive performances that bring the philosophical underpinnings of the lyrics to life. This

allows the audience to experience a deeper resonance with the themes of life, society and personal introspection presented in the music. These performances not only showcase the singer's technical prowess, but also their ability to interpret and express complex philosophical concepts through music.

In today's digital age, the integration of modern electronic music tools has transformed how vocal music, including arias, is created and consumed. Especially among the younger generation, short-form content on platforms, like TikTok and YouTube, has become a prevalent medium for musical expression. These platforms enable young artists to incorporate advanced electronic music technologies and innovative production techniques to enhance the traditional elements of aria. By doing so, they make classical music concepts more accessible and relatable to a global youth audience.

Incorporating a discussion on the use of modern electronic music tools, in the context of aria, would not only reflect the evolving landscape of musical expression, but also strengthen the connection of manuscript with younger generations. Highlighting how these tools are used to create, perform and share music, in the digital realm, can provide insights into the contemporary ways in which music serves as a communication medium, bridging classical art forms with cutting-edge technology and new media platforms.

In this era, short video platforms have become one of the main channels for young people to obtain information and entertainment. Therefore, modern musicians should collaborate with these platforms to present their music works in the form of short format content, attracting the young audiences' attention. By publishing music videos, short films and other content on these platforms, musicians can more effectively reach young audiences and establish closer connections with them. In addition, modern musicians should also make full use of electronic music creation tools to create music works that are in line with the trend of the times. These tools can not only help musicians achieve creativity, but also provide them with more diverse musical expressions, better catering to the young audiences' tastes and needs.

2.3.3 INSPIRATION OF VOCAL MUSIC

Philosophy raises fundamental questions about human life, consciousness, knowledge, morality and values, and aims to recognize and understand the principles and essence behind these fundamental questions. Philosophy advocates personal understanding and reflection, reflecting on one's beliefs, opinions and biases. Through philosophical thinking, it can effectively help people better understand their own way of thinking. The art of vocal music is enlightening, as it can express and inspire people's thinking through vocal music. Vocal music works are composed of multiple musical elements, such as harmony,

melody, rhythm, etc. Their structure is often complex, and they have a strong development history in the art of vocal music. They not only contain various styles, but also span different cultures and historical periods, expressing diverse emotions and conveying concepts. In the expression of vocal music, its complexity and diversity can promote people's thinking about the emergence and evolution of order and chaos in the social system. By comparing different types and styles of vocal music, it can also help people understand and recognize the worldviews and philosophical views that arise in different cultural and developmental environments. At the same time, the lyrics in vocal music also contain many philosophical issues, such as life, existence, meaning, etc. When singing vocal music, the expressive power of the singer's music helps to simplify and concretize these complex, diverse and abstract philosophical issues. In this process of exploration, people can resonate in their thinking and emotions, triggering profound contemplation of life philosophy and deepening their diverse understanding of complex life and society.

2.3.4 AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF VOCAL MUSIC

Vocal music, as an art form, can provide a unique aesthetic experience and observation, allowing people to feel the power and depth of beauty through the combination of music and lyrics (Cai, 2022, p. 152). By appreciating vocal works, people can immerse themselves in the charm of music, feel the existence of beauty and aesthetic pleasure. This aesthetic experience is not only an appreciation of vocal works themselves, but also a perception of the essence and existence of beauty, thereby expanding people's understanding and experience of beauty. Sound is not only a form of musical expression, but also an emotional expression and aesthetic experience. Through his singing, people can feel the beauty and power of music, and experience the depth and breadth of human emotions and existence experiences. The opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, by German composer Richard Wagner is a masterpiece of vocal art, which is also a model for profound exploration of beauty and the meaning of existence. Wagner cleverly utilized various artistic techniques, such as vocal, musical and stage performance to create a grand and profound artistic world. Through singing, he expressed epic stories and complex emotions to the fullest, immersing listeners in it and enjoying a unique aesthetic experience. This is not only entertainment, but also a philosophical exploration of human aesthetics and the meaning of existence. Through the aesthetic experience of vocal music, people can transcend the trivial and ordinary aspects of daily life, enter an aesthetic realm that transcends time and space, and inspire philosophical thinking on beauty, art and human creativity.

Vocal music, as an art form, has rich emotional expression, conceptual communication and inspiration, providing a unique tool and approach for philosophical exploration. Through vocal music, people can deeply feel the sincerity and depth of emotions, the abstraction and

concreteness of thoughts, as well as the inspiration and guidance of wisdom. Vocal music, as a form of expression that transcends language, culture, and time and space, can touch people's hearts, convey ideas and trigger profound thinking about life, existence and value. Through vocal music, people can experience the sincerity of emotions, the profoundness of thoughts and the enlightenment of wisdom, thereby inspiring people to deeply think and explore life, existence and value. Vocal music is not only an artistic expression, but also a tool and medium for philosophical exploration, providing important support and inspiration for the exploration of human spiritual world and thoughts.

3 DISCUSSION

Vocal music transforms abstract philosophical thoughts and emotions into tangible musical expressions through variations in tone, pitch and emotional delivery. This transformation demonstrates the philosophical concepts of unity of opposites, the whole and the part, and the interplay between material and spiritual realms, thus provoking deep reflection and resonance within the listener. This intricate process reveals vocal music as not just an artistic expression, but also a profound medium for exploring the complexities of human thought and existential questions.

This article examines how vocal music influences our understanding on four levels: emotional expression, conceptual communication, inspiration and aesthetic experience. As a powerful conduit for emotional expression, vocal music touches the individuals' innermost feelings, stirring contemplations on profound life themes, such as love, self-identity and existential purpose. The aesthetic experience, provided by vocal music, offers a rich and immersive understanding of the diversity and depth of the human spirit, thereby enhancing our comprehension of life's meanings.

To further enrich this exploration, it would be beneficial to incorporate discussions on the techniques used in vocal music, the content of the music itself and its relevance to philosophical concepts. Additionally, examining how vocal music resonates with the thoughts and leadership styles of China's younger generation could provide valuable insights. By aligning vocal music with the contemporary philosophical and cultural narratives prevalent among young thinkers and leaders in China, this discussion could significantly deepen the engagement of the younger audience of magazine, connecting them more profoundly with the rich philosophical underpinnings of vocal music and its relevance to their personal and collective experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

As society grows increasingly complex, the integration of vocal music and philosophy becomes crucial for exploring profound human emotions and societal issues. This interdisciplinary approach enriches our understanding of the world by blending musical expression with philosophical inquiry. Vocal music serves as a powerful medium to express and explore deep philosophical concepts, facilitating a better understanding of life, human nature and society. The exploration of philosophy through vocal music encourages reflection on existential questions, enriching the cultural narrative and providing insights into the human condition.

Moreover, the influence of Western media and new vocal styles on mainstream Chinese music introduces fresh perspectives and challenges, fostering innovation within China's musical landscape. This cultural exchange not only rejuvenates traditional musical forms, but also introduces new methods of philosophical discourse through music. By adopting Western musical innovations, Chinese artists and educators can enhance the philosophical depth of music education, thereby nurturing students' creativity and philosophical acumen. This fusion of Eastern and Western musical philosophies promotes a broader cultural understanding and appreciation, contributing significantly to the global evolution of music and philosophical thought.

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