

The Analysis of The Musical Structure and Aesthetic Expression of “Love Forever” by “Yimeng Mountain”

Yuan Shuai^a
Chao Kanwicha^b
Akachai Teerapuksiri^{c*}

Article Info
Received 1 March 2024
Revised 11 April 2024
Accepted 12 April 2024
Available online 30 April 2024

^a M.A. Students, Music Education Program,
Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand, E-mail: Shuai.Yua@bru.ac.th

^b Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Doctor of Music Education Program,
Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand, E-mail: chao@bru.ac.th

^{c*} Ph.D., Doctor of Music Education Program, Buriram Rajabhat University,
Thailand, E-mail: akachai.tp@bru.ac.th

Abstract

This article was on the analysis of the musical structure and aesthetic expression of “Love Forever” by “Yimeng Mountain”. The objective of this study To analyze the musical structure and aesthetic expression of “Love Forever” by “Yimeng Mountain”. The result of this study found that The main theme or melody of the music may undergo various variations in the repeated and developed sections, such as changes in melodic lines, repetition, or alterations in notes. These variations make the music richer and more diverse, capturing the audience's interest. Musicians may also employ counterpoint techniques, creating harmonic relationships between different voice parts. This can enhance the harmony and complexity of the music, conveying more layers of emotion. At times, the contrapuntal relationships in the music may undergo variations, meaning changes in the relationships between different voice parts. This can create more dynamics and emotional climaxes in the music.

Keywords: Musical Ananlysis, Musical Structure, Aestiatic Expression, Love Forever by Yimeng Mountain

Introduction

Chinese opera, which was originated in the early 20th century, is a mixture of traditional opera and western music art style of the comprehensive art form. The development of Chinese opera has gone through many stages from traditional song and dance to modern musical and rock opera (Fan. 2022: 5 -8). The creation and performance of Chinese opera, on the basis of the continuous practice of traditional Chinese aesthetic concepts, combined with new elements of the development of the times, has become a modern stage art with Chinese characteristics and innovative spirit (Xu. 2022: 78 -83). In modern China, opera as an important art form has been widely promoted and developed. In recent years, the scale of the creation and performance of Chinese operas has been continuously expanded, and the contents have become more diverse, “White-haired girl”, “The Red Detachment of Women” and “The Airwaves that Never Die” have become classics of Chinese Opera and have won critical acclaim from audiences, and has participated in many international arts festival performances. However, the development of Chinese opera also faces some difficulties and challenges (Zhang. 2022: 2).

The main problem is that the audience is still relatively small, brand awareness and international art level has a certain gap. In addition, due to funding, performance venues, performance timing, and other factors, some good creative performance can only be limited to a specific city or venue. In view of these problems, it is necessary to further expand the audience group of opera, improve the level of creation and performance, strengthen the investment of funds and venues, and formulate an art promotion policy which is more suitable for the actual situation in China, etc., to promote the development and progress of Chinese opera.

In recent years, the development of Chinese ethnic opera has garnered much attention, with more and more works appearing. "Yimeng Mountain", as one of the representative works of Chinese ethnic opera, is worthy of in-depth study. Meanwhile, the "Love Forever" tune in the opera has unique characteristics in melody and emotional expression, which could have a positive effect on exploring the charm of ethnic opera music, the way of emotional expression, and the implied meaning of Chinese ethnic culture (Zhou & Lin. 2018: 20-21). In-depth research on the vocalization tune "Love Forever" in the ethnic opera "Yimeng Mountain" could enhance people's understanding and recognition of musical theatre art, improve the artistic level of Chinese musical theatre, and promote the development of the Chinese musical theatre industry according to Lin (2018: 92-93). Moreover, the study of the "Love Always Exists" tune in "Yimeng Mountain" could enhance the audience's appreciation and comprehension ability of music works and increase their understanding and experience of traditional Chinese culture.

In summary, the analysis of the musical structure and aesthetic expression of "Love Forever" by "Yimeng Mountain", the study of the classic song "Love Forever" from the local opera on "Yimeng Mountain" is an in-depth exploration of traditional Chinese music culture and a retrospective study of the development of Chinese music. It also provides complete content and resources for singing education. From this research, we will be able to better understand and express the unique aspects of Chinese music. With this importance, the researcher is, therefore, interested in the analysis of the musical structure and aesthetic expression of "Love Forever" by "Yimeng Mountain"

Objective

To analyze the musical structure and aesthetic expression of "Love Forever" by Yimeng Mountain"

Literature Review

Singing is one of those skills that must be taught properly. There is an important approach to cultivate students' musical literacy and artistic cultivation. Through the study of music, students can develop their aesthetic taste, expressive abilities, and collaborative skills. The aria "Love Forever" from the ethnic opera "Yimeng Mountain" is a well-known and profound musical work. Its research and application in music education hold significant meaning. Before delving into the study of "Love Forever," it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of the background and artistic characteristics of this musical piece. "Yimeng

Mountain" is a mass opera that reflects the rural revolutionary struggles in China. The aria "Love Forever" is one of the classic scenes in the opera (Cui. 2020: 39).

The study of "Love Forever" can help improve students' music appreciation and expressive abilities. Music, as an art form, possesses rich expressive power and the ability to convey emotions. Through studying and performing "Love Forever," students can acquire knowledge about rhythm, melody, harmony, and structure, cultivating a solid foundation in music appreciation. Furthermore, through singing and performing, students can enhance their music-expressive abilities, conveying inner emotions and sentiments (Du & Zhu. 2020: 36-38).

Moreover, the study of "Love Forever" can foster students' teamwork and collaboration. Choral singing is a common teaching method in music education, promoting teamwork and a sense of collective honor. Students can form a choir to learn and perform "Love Forever," achieving a harmonious musical expression through collaboration. This not only cultivates students' collaborative spirit but also enhances their confidence and stage performance skills (Du & Zhang. 2020: 65-68).

Additionally, studying "Love Forever" expands the content of music education. Music education should prioritize comprehensive development, focusing not only on basic music theory and skills but also on introducing excellent music works for students to understand and appreciate various genres and styles of music. Through studying "Love Forever," students can experience the unique charm and artistic value of ethnic opera, broadening their musical horizons (Duan & Zhang. 2019: 94-96).

Singing skills are the various techniques and methods used during the process of singing a song in order to achieve a more precise, moving, and outstanding singing effect. These specific techniques include breath control, which involves combining breath and song rhythm to perform the entire song seamlessly (Yang. 2020: 43-44), accurate pronunciation, where the singer should pay attention to enunciating clearly while maintaining natural and flowing delivery in line with the song melody (Wang. 2021: 93-94). Moreover, the singer should be able to master the sense of rhythm in the song, coordinate the rhythms of both the song and the singing to ensure a natural and smooth performance (Fan. 2019: 65-68), control the pitch, accurately grasp the pitch of the song, and make the voice rise and fall smoothly and sound great (Zhang. 2019: 83-86). Furthermore, more techniques include expressing emotions, paying attention not only to techniques such as intonation and pitch but also to express the emotion conveyed in the song, delivering touching feelings that allow the audience to better understand the emotions of the song (Bu & Liang. 2019: 47-49), demonstrating a personalized style by not merely copying the original singer, but by retaining the original character and adding one's own unique elements to highlight one's individual style, thus enhancing the character of the song and the singer's performance style (Chen. 2019: 63-64). In addition, Nie (2019: 67-71) suggests that the technique also includes transition from strong to weak, adequately controlling the changes in intensity of the song and its emotional expression by flexibly adjusting the volume according to the changes in the content of the song, in order to fully cooperate with the emotional expression sound processing, which is a crucial technique in singing. Moreover, where suitable, electronic and recording technologies are employed in the music production process to adjust the tone, volume, and reverb in order to make the song more moving (Lin. 2019: 98-100).

In conclusion, the study of the aria "Love Forever" from the ethnic opera "Yimeng Mountain" encompasses research on its background, artistic characteristics, music appreciation, expressive abilities, teamwork, and educational extensions. In-depth research and application of this work can enhance students' musical literacy, artistic cultivation, aesthetic

taste, expressive abilities, teamwork, and stage performance skills. Therefore, conducting in-depth research on "Love Forever" holds great value and significance in music education.

Research Methodology

This study employed a one-on-one method interview questions and observation items, selected five music professors and five music students as key informants. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, with each participant provided a pre-designed interview guide to ensure consistency in the interview content. The main topics of the interviews include the participants' understanding of the artistic features of "Love Forever" analysis of its musical structure, recognition of singing techniques, and views on its teaching methods and educational significance in music education, and finally found the Analysis of the Melody of the Song.

Research Finding

1. The introductory section of the first 8 bars is in D minor, with a medium strength, using broken chords to enhance the overall and soothing qualities of the music. Together with the description of "Lin Sheng" on the beauty of his hometown, the beautiful melody line flows into the performer's psyche, evoking feelings of homesickness. The musical form uses parallel periods, with the upper phrase ending on the dominant note of the mode, and the lower phrase ending on the tonic note. The lower phrase repeats the material of the first half of the upper phrase, forming a structure of same beginning and ending, and echoing each other.

A					B	
:A: :B:					:C: :C':	
1-8	9-25		26-47		48-82	83-107
Introduction	a a1	b b1	expand	connect	C c1	d d1
8	8	9	21	1	16+16	8+16
D Dorian	D Dorian - G Mixolydian	D Dorian	G Mixolydian	e Feather	E (Shang) note	E (Shang) note

Figure 1: Musical Form

2. The exposition section from bars 9-25 consists of two segments, each of which is composed of a compound melody, in the key of D major, using a compound melody structure. The upper and lower segments have a large parallel relationship, with corresponding closure for each segment: the upper segment ends in an open dominant seventh chord cadence, while the lower segment ends in a full tonic chord cadence. The structure shares similarities with a parallel-periodic structure.

3. The main chord: the accompaniment texture of bars 8-16 features the tonic chord with the main melody. The main melody usually appears in the climax of the entire work, or in the opening part. The appearance of the main melody here echoes the ending climax, while also pushing forward the opening music. See Figure 4.2 for details.



Figure 2: Musical Notation Bar 9 –16

4. The accompaniment texture of bars 17-25 shifts to broken chords, and adopts the shaping technique in the musical form. From the same accompaniment texture, the fixed melody line can convey the emotional changes brought about by the repetitive section. See Figure 4.3 for details.



Figure 3: Musical Notation Bar 20 – 22

5. The creative techniques used in bars 26-47 include repetition and sequence. The repetition section completely repeats the preceding bars. The sequence technique uses the same accompaniment texture, repeating the preceding bar's melody with the previous note as the root note. The vocal part uses parallel sentence structure, with each phrase starting weakly, to express the feeling of homesickness and nostalgia for hometown in "Lin Sheng". The emotional atmosphere of sadness permeates the entire section. See Figure 4.4 for details.



Figure 4: Musical Notation Bar 28 – 37

6. Bars 48-82 are in the E minor pentatonic and adopt the rhythm of a march, expressing a sense of battle. This section reflects the determination of "Lin Sheng" when he joined the army, the willingness to die for the country, and his desire for victory. The changes in melody, dynamics, and tempo fully express the singer's internal changes. See Figure 4.5 for details.



Figure 5: Musical Notation 48 – 65

7. In bars 84-107, the material is developed based on the "3-7 perfect fifth relationship" motif from the first section, with a slower tempo and a stark contrast to the march-like rhythm of the first section. Parallel sections are the most important technique used in this section to express the music. The first phrase is identical to the second one, but the ending of the second phrase is different from the first.



Figure 6: Musical Notation 84 – 107

The interpretive section is the core of the work, typically comprising the main lyrics and emotional expression. In “Love Forever” the musical form of the interpretive section is often more complex, including multiple movements and musical elements. These elements can be related to harmony, melody, rhythm, and more. Usually, the musical form of the interpretive section varies based on the content of the lyrics and emotional expression. Musicians use different harmonies, melodies, and rhythms to convey various emotions and themes in the lyrics. For example, when expressing sorrowful emotions, the music may adopt a slower tempo and lower notes to intensify the depth of emotions. The interpretive section often consists of multiple movements, and these movements are usually interconnected through transitions or recurring elements. This helps enhance the continuity of the music and emotional expression. In the repeated and developed sections of music, the musical form often undergoes various changes to increase the complexity and emotional climax of the music. These sections typically include elements of climax and heightened emotions, such as fast-paced notes and high-pitched tones. In these parts, musicians often employ various musical elements like polyphony, variations, counterpoint, and variances of counterpoint to enhance the complexity and expressiveness of the music. Musicians may introduce different melodic lines in these sections, allowing multiple melodic lines to coexist simultaneously, creating a polyphonic effect. This can add depth and complexity to the music, conveying a broader range of emotions. The main theme or melody of the music may undergo various variations in the repeated and developed sections, such as changes in melodic lines, repetition, or alterations in notes. These variations make the music richer and more diverse, capturing the audience's interest. Musicians may also employ counterpoint techniques, creating harmonic relationships between different voice parts. This can enhance the harmony and complexity of the music, conveying more layers of emotion. At times, the contrapuntal relationships in the music may undergo variations, meaning changes in the relationships between different voice parts. This can create more dynamics and emotional climaxes in the music. These changes and techniques contribute to the creation of musical climaxes and emotional highs. For instance, in an exciting section, musicians may use rapid notes and high pitches to express feelings of joy and excitement. In the repeated and developed sections, these elements might be emphasized and further developed, making the music more vivid and captivating. The variation and richness of the music's form in the repeated and developed sections are crucial components of musical expressiveness. They help increase the complexity and emotional climax of the music, making the musical piece more unforgettable. This guidance is essential for musicians and performers when singing “Love Forever” or other musical compositions.



Figure 7: Musical Notation Bar 99-107

The musical form plays a highly significant role in the song "Love Forever" aiding in organizing, presenting, and conveying the overall themes, emotions, and expressions of the entire piece. Let's delve into the specific roles of musical form within this song to better understand its contributions to the development and emotional expression of the song. The song typically begins with simple melodies and musical elements. In "Love Forever" the introduction features a melody in D minor, with a moderate musical intensity, employing arpeggios to enhance the overall mellowness. This part complements the lyrical descriptions of the beauty of "Lin Sheng" hometown, with a beautiful melodic line flowing into the performer's heart, evoking feelings of homesickness. The musical form adopts parallel sentence structures, concluding the upper part with the tonic chord and the lower part with the dominant seventh chord. The lower part repeats material from the first half of the upper part, establishing a structure with matching beginnings and endings that echo each other. As the song progresses to the interpretation section, the musical form begins to grow more intricate. It consists of two paragraphs, each composed of a compound melody in D major. There is a substantial parallel relationship between the upper and lower parts, with each paragraph concluding with corresponding cadences: the upper part ending with an open dominant seventh chord, and the lower part with a complete tonic chord cadence. This structure bears resemblance to the parallel sentence structure. In the music of the interpretation section, the accompaniment features a tonic harmony, with the main melody typically appearing at the climax or the beginning of the entire piece. The appearance of the main melody here both recalls the climax at the conclusion and propels the musical beginning. The accompaniment structure in this section shifts to arpeggios, utilizing shaping techniques within the musical form. Through the consistent accompaniment structure, the fixed melodic line can convey the emotional changes brought about by the repeated and developed sections. This is a key characteristic of the musical form, continually responding to and emphasizing the emotional shifts in the repeated and developed sections throughout the piece. This part employs different musical modes and rhythms, creating a martial atmosphere. The music is in E major, utilizing a march-like rhythm, conveying "Lin Sheng" determination when joining the army, the willingness to sacrifice for the country, and the desire for victory. The variations in melody, volume, and tempo effectively express the inner emotional changes of the performer. In the subsequent section, the musical material is

developed based on the 3-7 perfect fifth relationship" motif from the first part of the composition. It employs a slower tempo, forming a distinct contrast to the march-like rhythm of the first part.

In these different sections, the changes and developments in the musical form reflect the emotional shifts and thematic progress of the piece. The introduction conveys emotions of homesickness and peace, the interpretation section enhances the complexity of the music, the repetition and development sections express determination and the desire for victory, and the final section, through its slow tempo and repetition of musical elements, conveys introspection and reflection of emotions. This diversity and development within the musical form assist the audience in better understanding the lyrical content and deeply experiencing the emotions and themes of the piece.

Discussion/Conclusion

Musical Form Characteristics

The singing section in "Love Forever" utilizes traditional folk modes with the main key of E minor. Throughout the section, the emotional development and change are reflected by the changes in tonality. The rhythm of the section is generally stable with a 4/4 meter, four beats per measure; however, the singer can exercise some degree of freedom in expressing emotions. The melody of the section is beautiful and moving, characterized by a simple folk style with some modern music elements, rendering a strong contemporary sense. The melody is mainly led by the singer's voice, expressing the emotional ups and downs in a clear and straightforward way. The musical form of the solo "Love Forever" performed by Lin Sheng in the opera is a typical ABA form. The introduction part is 8 measures long, followed by A part composed of two sections: a section (measures 9-25) and b section (measures 26-48). Each section consists of two corresponding phrases. The music starts from the lyrics "The wind blows over, the clouds float over," depicting the beautiful scenery of the protagonist's hometown. At the beginning of a section a, the tonality is mainly in D mode, which transforms into G mode in the repeating b section (measures 26-48), with the main note changing from D to G. This represents the return of the subdominant note to the main note in music. Part B immediately follows the connecting section and spans from measure 50 to 82. It is also divided into two sections, c section and d section, each consisting of two phrases. The music atmosphere changes from the previous lyric style to a marching style, with a lot of dotted notes simulating a sense of tension. The tonality of c section is E Aeolian mode, highlighting the desolate tone of war. Part C is relatively short from measure 83 to 98 and it changes from E Aeolian mode to E Phrygian mode, which is a transition to the same main key with styles more intense and sorrowful, making it more accurate in reflecting the emotional content of the work. The ending of the piece is from measures 99 to 107 with the use of E Phrygian mode, slowing down the pace and extending phrases to conclude the melody. From the beginning of the opera solo "Love Forever" the accompaniment mostly uses broken chords to pave the way for the music, emphasizing the smoothness of the music. Starting from measure 17 of a part of A section, the accompaniment is dominated by the broken chords of major triads, showing a bright and cheerful quality. From the 20th measure, the accompaniment uses chords that are mostly diminished seventh chords. With the change of harmony, the sound becomes more diminished and the music emotion becomes more complicated. Part B of A section is a supplement to the three-part form and is faster in tempo than a section. In the accompaniment, both the upper and lower voices mainly use eighth notes, enriching the chord progression and making the melody more layered. Compared to A section, part B has undergone significant

changes. This section is faster in tempo. C part consists of a two-part form, which changes into a marching style in parallel, with the faster pace making the motive of the melody more passionate.

Melodic Features

In terms of melody, the melody mainly adopts the flat tone commonly used in Chinese folk music. The melody is graceful, smooth and full of appeal, reflecting the unique charm of Chinese national music. In addition, the song also uses different rhythm changes, thus creating a sense of rhythm and level. At the same time, the accompaniment of the harmony part of the use of a simple harmony processing, making the whole chorus more harmonious and unified. From the perspective of performance techniques, the singer of "Love Forever" shows a very high artistic level in voice performance, vocal style, music emotional performance and so on. The singer's voice performance is very pure, natural, strong, and the sound quality has the characteristics of Chinese national music. The Chinese folk music style is adopted in the vocal style, with a natural but not artificial, smooth and not intentional vocal style, so that the audience feel a deep emotion. In the aspect of music emotion expression, the singer successfully conveys the profound friendship and moving emotion expressed by the song through the means of voice and singing, the lyrics of the song "Love Forever" express the theme of the military and civilian fish and water, and show the deep feelings between the People's army and the people through the true description and rich emotional expression. The literary features of the lyrics are reflected in the simplicity of the language and the sincerity of the feelings.

Suggestion

1. You should study music analysis in other formats that can be useful in studying singing.
2. Should study contemporary music analysis that can be studied by people all over who are interested in contemporary singing.
3. You should study techniques for teaching singing in other formats that can be useful in developing singing teaching models.

References

- Bu, J., & Liang, R. (2019). *On the Cultural Connotation of Yimengshan, a National Opera Literary Criticism (Theoretical Edition)*. [in Chinese]. China: Chinese and Foreign Enterprise Culture.
- Chen, Y. (2019). "Analysis on the Formal Characteristics of Yimengshan, a National Opera." [in Chinese] [Online]. *Popular Music*. Retrieved 20 March 2021, from https://caod.oriprobe.com/articles/58267200/ren_gong_zhi_neng_cun_zai_xing_feng_xian_de_lun_li.htm
- Cui, Y. (2020). "Inheriting and Innovating Traditional Music in the 'Love Forever' Aria of the Ethnic Opera 'Yimeng Mountain'." [in Chinese]. *Ziyang College Journal*. 32(4), 39.
- Du, Q., & Zhang, X. (2020). "On the Cultural Connotation and Musical Form of the Ethnic Opera 'Yimeng Mountain'." [in Chinese]. *Journal of Shandong College of Art*. 45(4), 65-68.

- Du, J., & Zhu, X. (2020). *From 'Yimeng Mountain' to 'Red Flag Ode': The Humanistic Spirit of Contemporary Chinese Opera*. [in Chinese]. China: Fujian Literature and Art.
- Duan, D., & Zhang, L. (2019). "On the Artistic Value of Music in 'Yimeng Mountain'." [in Chinese]. *Journal of Anhui Normal University (Humanities & Social Sciences)*. (4), 94-126.
- Fan, W. (2022). *Research on Music Image Creation in Chinese Opera*. China: Fujian Literature and Art.
- Fan, X. (2019). "On the Pragmatic Rhetoric of Yimengshan's Aria Lyrics." [in Chinese]. *Journal of Shaanxi Normal University (Social Science Edition)*. 3, 54-68.
- Lin, H. (2019). "On the External Transmission of Yimengshan, a National Opera." [in Chinese]. *Heilongjiang Higher Education Research*. 17(2), 98-100.
- Nie, H. (2019). "Exploring the Musical Expression Techniques in Yimengshan, a National Opera." *Friend of Music*. 6, 67-71.
- Wang, H. (2021). "Analysis of the Musical Expression in the 'Love Forever' Aria of 'Yimeng Mountain'." [in Chinese]. *Music Appreciation*. 13, 93-94.
- Xu, W. (2022). "On the 'Long Songs' and 'Short Tunes' in Chinese Ethnic Opera." [in Chinese]. *Opera Exploration*. 21(3), 78-83.
- Yang, J. (2020). "Analyzing the Musical Characteristics of the Aria 'Love Never Fades' in 'Yimeng Mountain'." [in Chinese]. *Music Teaching and Research*. 12(5) : 43-44.
- Zhang, D. (2019). "The Aesthetic Value of Chinese Ethnic Opera Seen from Yimengshan." [in Chinese]. *Journal of Anhui Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*. 11(2), 83-86.
- Zhang, K. (2022). "Contemporary Chinese Opera Nationalization: Practice and Reflection." [in Chinese]. *Chinese Drama*. 16(1), 2.
- Zhou, M., & Lin, L. (2018). "On the Aesthetic Value of the Melody of 'Yimeng Mountain' Aria." [in Chinese]. *Chinese Music News*. 9(4), 20-21.