



The Singing Techniques of Long Baoling in Huangmei Opera Performances

Xue Wang¹ and Tawanchai Suanmonta²

College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

¹Corresponding author e-mail: xuewang.msu@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7210-182X>

²E-mail: tawanchai.s@msu.ac.th, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0210-1128>

Received 22/02/2025

Revised 04/03/2025

Accepted 07/04/2025

Abstract

Background and Aims: Huangmei Opera, one of China's most renowned regional opera forms, is characterized by its lyrical melodies and expressive singing techniques. Long Baoling, a distinguished performer, has significantly contributed to preserving and refining Huangmei Opera's vocal artistry. This study examines and analyzes Long Baoling's distinctive singing techniques in Huangmei Opera performances.

Methodology: This research employs a qualitative approach, combining performance analysis, interviews, and field observations. The representative performances of Long Baoling were transcribed and analyzed using musical notation software. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts and practitioners to gain insights into her vocal style. Direct performance observations were also recorded to document her singing techniques and artistic expression.

Results: Findings reveal that Long Baoling employs true voice singing to maintain vocal stability and resonance, while controlled vibrato and ornaments enhance musical fluidity and emotional depth. Her strategic use of ornamentation, including grace notes and dynamic variations, contributes to melodic expressiveness. Emotional expression is achieved through vocal modulation, adjusting tone, intensity, and phrasing to enhance character portrayal and storytelling.

Conclusion: Long Baoling's singing techniques exemplify the balance between tradition and innovation in Huangmei Opera. Her vocal artistry preserves the genre's authenticity and introduces refined techniques that ensure its continued relevance. These findings provide valuable insights for performers, educators, and researchers in Chinese opera studies.

Keywords: Huangmei Opera; Long Baoling; Vocal Techniques; Ornamentation; Emotional Expression

Introduction

Huangmei Opera, one of China's most renowned regional opera forms, has captivated audiences for generations with its lyrical melodies, gentle vocal style, and rich storytelling. Originating from Anhui Province, Huangmei Opera has evolved from a folk tradition into a refined theatrical genre that integrates singing, acting, and expressive movement. Unlike other Chinese operatic styles, such as Peking Opera or Kunqu, Huangmei Opera is distinguished by its soft, flowing





melodies, clear diction, and emotionally expressive singing techniques (Qi, 2018; Zhang, 2022; Zhao & Sornyai, 2024). Over the years, many artists have contributed to its development, refining its vocal techniques while preserving its traditional essence. Among them, Long Baoling has emerged as a significant figure in the contemporary Huangmei Opera scene, not only for her exceptional vocal control and stage presence but also for her dedication to promoting and innovating the art form (Chen, 2021; Reid, 2018; Shewell & Sansom, 2024). Her singing style showcases a unique blend of traditional vocal techniques, modern refinements, and deep emotional expressiveness, making her a subject of great interest to scholars and practitioners of Chinese opera.

Despite the enduring popularity of Huangmei Opera, the transmission of its traditional singing techniques faces significant challenges. The growing influence of contemporary musical styles, the decline in younger audiences' interest in traditional opera, and the modernization of stage performance have all contributed to shifts in Huangmei Opera's vocal delivery. These changes risk losing fundamental singing techniques that define the authenticity of Huangmei Opera (Chang et al., 2024; Chua, 2019). While some scholars have explored the historical evolution of the art form, few studies have specifically analyzed the technical elements of vocal delivery in performances by key artists such as Long Baoling (Chi et al., 2024; Peiheng & Kaewbucha, 2025). Her mastery of breath control, vibrato, portamento (sliding tones), and emotional phrasing allows her to examine how traditional techniques are preserved, adapted, and innovated in modern Huangmei Opera performances. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting a detailed analysis of Long Baoling's singing techniques and their role in shaping the expressive and technical aspects of Huangmei Opera.

Through an in-depth study of her vocal techniques, melodic structures, and expressive nuances, this research seeks to understand how her artistry contributes to the preservation and evolution of Huangmei Opera (Malawey, 2020; Sun, 2023). The study is guided by the question, "What are the distinctive singing techniques employed by Long Baoling in Huangmei Opera performances?" By focusing on her interpretations of key opera pieces, the study explores how she employs ornamentation, phrasing, and vocal modulation to enhance storytelling and character portrayal. This research will also examine the balance she maintains between traditional vocal techniques and her innovative refinements, providing valuable insights into the changing landscape of Huangmei Opera (Bardoe, 2019; Liu, 2022).

The findings of this study will have significant implications for performers, educators, and researchers engaged in the study of Chinese traditional opera and vocal performance. For aspiring Huangmei Opera singers, this research will serve as a valuable reference on vocal technique and artistic interpretation. For music educators, the study can provide teaching materials and





frameworks for training students in traditional operatic singing (Chen & Woramitmaitee, 2024; Feng & Suanmonta, 2024; He & Sornyai, 2023). Additionally, for Chinese opera and ethnomusicology scholars, this research contributes to the documentation and understanding of the evolving vocal traditions in regional Chinese operas. Ultimately, this study deepens appreciation for Long Baoling's artistry and supports ongoing efforts to preserve and promote Huangmei Opera as a vital part of China's cultural heritage.

Research Objectives

To examine and analyze the distinctive singing techniques of Long Baoling in Huangmei Opera Performances.

Literature Review

Huangmei Opera, originating in Anhui Province, has significantly transformed from a rural folk tradition to a refined stage art. This transformation has brought about a deeper exploration of its musical structures, vocal aesthetics, and performance techniques. Among the notable figures in Huangmei Opera, Long Baoling stands out for her exceptional vocal control and nuanced singing techniques. Her performances are widely regarded as a benchmark for traditionalists and modern interpreters of the genre. This literature review examines three key areas relevant to this study: the evolution of Huangmei Opera, the role of vocal techniques in shaping its musical expression, and Long Baoling's contributions to the genre.

1. The Evolution of Huangmei Opera

Huangmei Opera has a long and rich historical trajectory, beginning as a folk singing tradition in the Qing Dynasty and evolving into a fully developed operatic form by the mid-20th century. Unlike other regional Chinese operas, such as Peking Opera or Yue Opera, Huangmei Opera retains a uniquely melodic, lyrical, and sentimental quality characterized by soft, flowing phrasing and clear enunciation. Initially, it was performed as a simple, folk-style duet, often accompanied by minimal instrumental support, making it accessible to common people. However, with its integration into formal stage performances, its musical structure became more elaborate, incorporating refined vocal techniques, richer orchestration, and intricate dramatic expressions (Auerbach, 2021; Coerne, 2018; Zhao & Sornyai, 2024).

Huangmei Opera has maintained a balance between its folk origins and theatrical evolution. Scholars have identified how melodic simplicity remains central to its identity. This allows performers to focus on expressive storytelling through voice rather than relying on highly stylized vocal acrobatics. This emphasis on the emotional sincerity of performance has made Huangmei Opera one of the more intimate and relatable forms of Chinese opera. Additionally, introducing





modern staging techniques and cross-cultural influences has shaped Huangmei Opera into a genre that continues to evolve while preserving its core musical characteristics (Li, 2024; Wu et al., 2022; Yuan, 2019).

2. The Role of Vocal Techniques in Huangmei Opera

The vocal techniques in Huangmei Opera are critical in shaping the performance's musical expression and emotional depth. Unlike other Chinese operatic traditions, which prioritize powerful projection or stylized vocal timbres, Huangmei Opera is defined by a gentle, naturalistic singing approach that emphasizes melody and diction. The vocal style is often described as light, fluid, and lyrical, focusing on clarity of pronunciation, smooth phrasing, and nuanced emotional delivery (Wang & Wen, 2024; Yu, 2024).

One of the most important vocal techniques in Huangmei Opera is breath control, which enables performers to sustain long, expressive phrases with seamless vocal transitions. This technique is particularly essential in slow, sentimental arias that require an intimate connection with the audience. Another defining characteristic is portamento, or the sliding between notes, which adds fluidity and expressiveness to melodies. This technique often evokes emotions such as longing, nostalgia, or joy, allowing singers to create a dynamic and emotionally engaging performance (Wang, 2023; Wang, 2022).

Additionally, Huangmei Opera incorporates ornamentation techniques, such as grace notes, trills, and subtle vibrato, which enhance the musical texture without overpowering the melody. Unlike in Peking Opera, where ornamentation is bold and dramatic, Huangmei Opera singers employ a more refined and restrained approach. This delicate vocal style allows for a greater focus on lyrical expression and storytelling, making vocal subtlety a defining trait of the genre (Fiddle, 2022; Zimmermann, 2021).

3. Long Baoling's Contribution to Huangmei Opera

As one of the leading performers of contemporary Huangmei Opera, Long Baoling has played a pivotal role in preserving traditional vocal techniques and introducing modern refinements. Her performances are recognized for their delicate balance of technical precision and deep emotional expressiveness. Unlike many contemporary singers who adopt a lighter, more modernized vocal approach, Long remains faithful to the true voice singing technique, ensuring that each note carries resonance, clarity, and strength while maintaining the natural lyricism characteristic of Huangmei Opera (Morgenstern, 2018; Reid, 2018; Zhang & Hu, 2023).

Her signature performance of "Shui Liao Huang Bang Zhong Zhuang Yuan" (from *Nv Fu Ma*) exemplifies her mastery of phrasing, breath control, and expressive vocal ornamentation. In this piece, she skillfully combines sustained notes, nuanced vibrato, and dynamic shifts in volume to convey the emotional complexity of her character. Her ability to transition seamlessly between



registers adds to the fluidity of the melody, creating a compelling and immersive performance. She also employs precise diction and controlled articulation, highlighting her commitment to the clarity and purity of Huangmei Opera's vocal tradition.

Beyond performance, Long Baoling has been instrumental in educating and mentoring young artists, ensuring the continuation of traditional singing techniques. She has revitalized the art form by incorporating subtle contemporary refinements while maintaining its core vocal aesthetics. Her influence extends beyond China, as she has participated in international performances, cultural exchanges, and digital initiatives to popularize Huangmei Opera worldwide.

Research Conceptual Framework

The research framework for this study is structured around a qualitative analysis of Long Baoling's singing techniques in selected performances of Huangmei Opera (Goldsmith, 2021; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Given that Huangmei Opera is known for its melodic expressiveness, smooth phrasing, and deep emotional resonance, analyzing Long Baoling's vocal approach provides valuable insights into both the traditional techniques of the genre and its modern evolution. The conceptual framework is organized into three key components: Vocal Technique, Expressive Ornamentation, and Emotional Expression. The key areas are as follows:

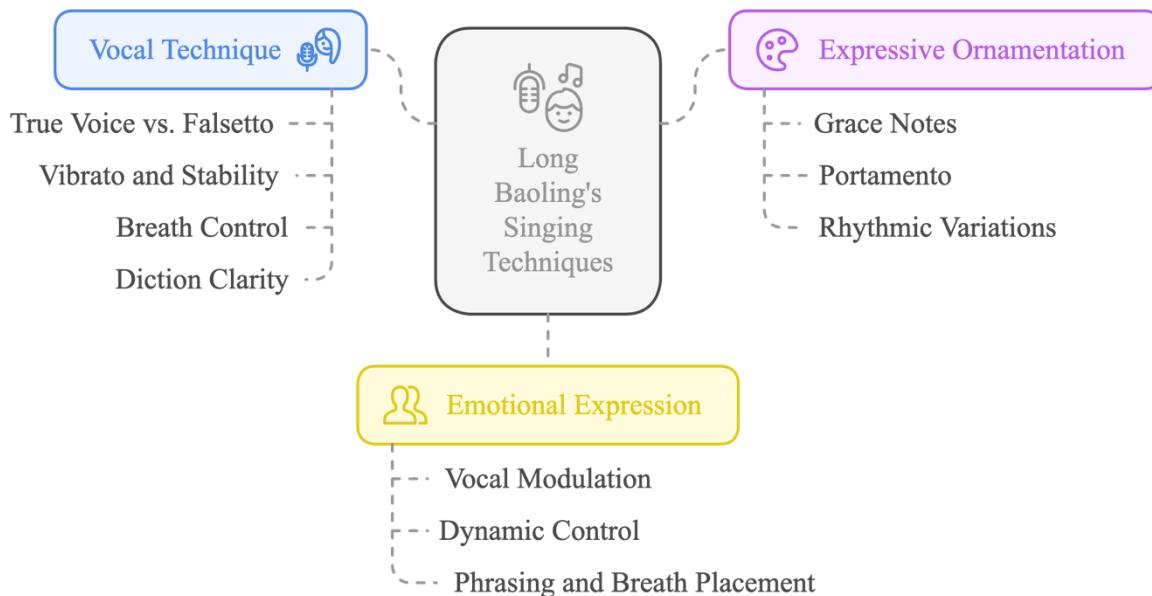


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework



Research Methodology

Given the expressive nature of Huangmei Opera, a detailed analysis of vocal techniques, ornamentation, and emotional expressiveness is required to understand Long Baoling's contributions to the genre. The methodology includes performance analysis, interviews, and field observations to capture the nuances of her artistry (Goldsmith, 2021; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The research methodology includes the following steps:

1. Scope of the Research

The scope of this study is structured into three key dimensions: content, research site, and time frame. These parameters define the boundaries of the investigation and ensure a focused analysis of Long Baoling's vocal artistry within Huangmei Opera, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Research Scope

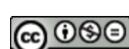
Scope Dimension	Description
Content	The study examines three representative pieces sung by Long Baoling, focusing on vocal techniques, artistic interpretation, and emotional expression.
Research Site	Field research was conducted in Anqing City, Anhui Province, which is considered the cultural heart of Huangmei Opera. This location provides access to archival materials, live performances, and direct engagement with practitioners.
Time	The research was conducted from June 2024 to January 2025, allowing sufficient time for data collection, analysis, and validation of findings.

2. Data Collection

The data collection process employs three primary methods to capture the technical, artistic, and contextual aspects of Long Baoling's singing style, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Data Collection Methods

Method	Purpose	Tools
Performance Analysis	To transcribe and analyze Long Baoling's vocal techniques in selected performances	Musical transcription software (Sibelius), spectrogram analysis for pitch/vibrato, and manual notation of melodic phrasing





Method	Purpose	Tools
Interviews	To collect qualitative insights on her vocal techniques, artistic approach, and interpretative style	Semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, and thematic coding of responses
Observation	To document her vocal delivery, body language, and interaction with the audience	Field notes, video documentation, live performance reviews

3. Data Analysis

The study analyzed data from performance analysis, interviews, and observations to understand Long Baoling's distinctive vocal techniques. The focus was on vocal analysis, which included breaking down melodic structures, vocal registers, breath control, ornamentation, and phrasing in selected performances. Thematic coding was used to categorize Long Baoling's singing techniques into key themes based on performance features and artistic expression. A comparative study compared Long Baoling's vocal style to traditional Huangmei Opera techniques and other renowned singers. This provided a detailed evaluation of Long Baoling's contribution to Huangmei Opera vocal techniques.

Results

Understanding the singing techniques of Long Baoling in Huangmei Opera performances requires an in-depth analysis of her vocal production, ornamentation, and emotional expressiveness. By examining selected performances, this study identifies three key aspects that define her distinctive style: true voice and vibrato, ornamentation techniques, and emotional expression through vocal modulation. These elements not only showcase her technical proficiency but also highlight how she enhances the dramatic and lyrical qualities of Huangmei Opera.

1. Use of True Voice and Vibrato

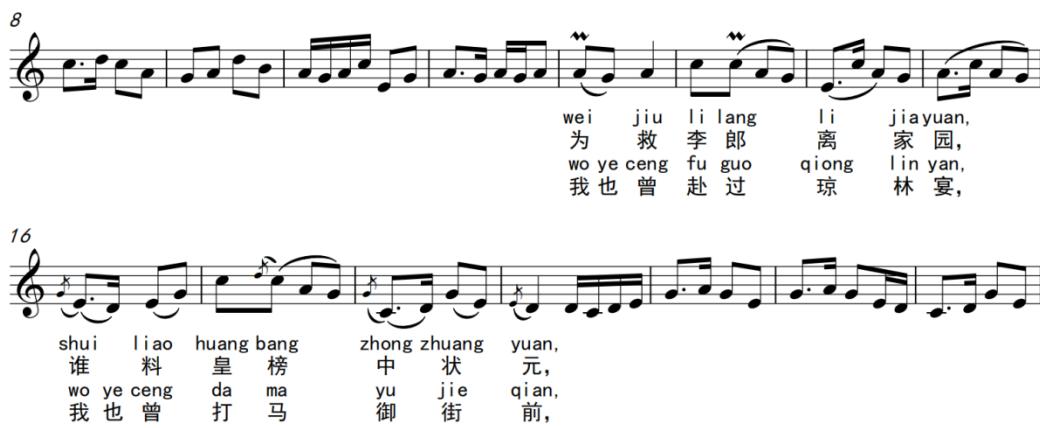
One of the defining characteristics of Long Baoling's singing technique is her consistent use of true voice, which ensures a full and natural sound throughout her performances. Unlike other Huangmei Opera singers who often switch to falsetto in high-pitched sections, Long Baoling maintains a rich, chest-dominant vocal tone, reinforcing her delivery's clarity, depth, and resonance. In an interview, Long Baoling described her preference for true voice as follows:

"True voice allows for a more grounded expression of character emotions. It enhances vocal resonance and ensures the audience connects with the character's inner world."





Her use of true voice is evident in “Shui Liao Huang Bang Zhong Zhuang Yuan” from Nv Fu Ma, where she sustains long, resonant notes with precision and control. Figure 2 illustrates the melodic structure between bars 12-19, showcasing her ability to maintain a powerful yet controlled sound.



8

wei jiu li lang li jia yuan,
为 救 李 郎 离 家 园,
wo ye ceng fu guo qiong lin yan,
我 也 曾 赴 过 琼 林 宴,

16

shui liao huang bang zhong zhuang yuan,
谁 料 皇 榜 中 状 元,
wo ye ceng da ma yu jie qian,
我 也 曾 打 马 御 街 前,



Figure 2 Melodic Structure and QR Code Video

In addition to true voice, vibrato is another essential aspect of Long Baoling's singing. She applies vibrato strategically, particularly at the end of sustained notes, to:

- 1.1 Enhance the warmth and richness of the melody.
- 1.2 Intensify the emotional expression of the character.
- 1.3 Create a sense of continuity between melodic phrases.

As shown in Figure 3 (bars 24-30), her vibrato is smooth and controlled, reinforcing the character's emotional complexity.



23

zhongzhuangyuan zhe hong pao, mao cha gonghua hao wa hao xin xian na.
中 状 元 着 红 袍, 帽 插 宫 花 好 哇 好 新 鲜 哪。
ren ren kua wo pan an mao, shui zhi sha mao zhao wa zha o chan juan na.
人 人 夸 我 潘 安 貌, 谁 知 纱 帽 罩 哇 罩 婵 娟 哪。

Figure 3 The Character's Emotional Complexity





As Table 3 shows, combining her true voice and vibrato enhances her performance's clarity, stability, and emotional depth.

Table 3 The Role of True Voice and Vibrato in Long Baoling's Singing

Technique	Function	Effect on Performance
True Voice	Produces a full, rich vocal tone	Ensures clarity, stability, and resonance
Vibrato	Applied at the end of sustained notes	Adds warmth, richness, and emotional intensity
Breath Control	Supports long phrases and even vibrato	Maintains vocal consistency and expressiveness

By combining true voice and vibrato, Long Baoling balances vocal power and delicate expressiveness, making her performance technically refined and emotionally compelling.

2. Ornamentation Techniques

Ornamentation is a defining feature of Long Baoling's interpretation of Huangmei Opera, setting her apart from contemporary performers. She incorporates a variety of decorative vocal elements, including:

2.1 Grace notes: Quick embellishing notes that add expressiveness to the melody.

2.2 Portamento (slides): Smooth glides between notes, creating a legato and fluid vocal line.

2.3 Dynamic variations: Subtle shifts in volume and tone to enhance phrasing and character expression.

These techniques serve artistic and expressive functions, enhancing the emotional impact of her performances.

As shown in Table 4, Long Baoling's ornamentation techniques contribute to melodic fluidity and vocal expressiveness, ensuring that her performances remain engaging and emotionally evocative.

Table 4 Ornamentation Techniques in Long Baoling's Singing

Technique	Function	Effect on Performance
Grace Notes	Add embellishment and agility	Make the melody more fluid and dynamic



Technique	Function	Effect on Performance
Portamento (Slides)	Smooth transition between notes	Creates legato phrasing and expressiveness
Dynamic Variation	Adjusts volume and emphasis	Highlights dramatic and lyrical moments

Long Baoling's singing style incorporates grace notes at the beginning or middle of phrases, enhancing delicacy and agility. In "Shui Liao Huang Bang Zhong Zhuang Yuan," she emphasizes lyrical expressions, making her vocal execution nuanced. Portamento, or smooth gliding between pitches, allows her to express subtle emotional transitions, depict hesitation or emotional depth, and maintain the soft, lyrical nature of Huangmei Opera. As shown in Figure 2, portamento is especially evident in bars 24-30, where Long Baoling connects high and low notes to create a graceful and expressive performance.

3. Emotional Expression Through Vocal Modulation

One of Long Baoling's greatest artistic strengths is her ability to convey deep emotions through vocal modulation. Huangmei Opera places significant emphasis on delicate emotional expression, requiring performers to adjust their vocal delivery according to a scene's psychological and dramatic context. Long Baoling skillfully manipulates tone, intensity, and phrasing, ensuring that her singing resonates with the audience on both a technical and emotional level. She achieves this by using three primary vocal modulation techniques:

3.1 Tone Adjustment: Expressing Character Emotions

Tone adjustment is one of the most crucial aspects of vocal modulation in Huangmei Opera. Long Baoling uses subtle changes in her vocal timbre to reflect a character's shifting emotions throughout a performance.

3.1.1 Light and bright tones: Used in moments of tenderness, joy, or playfulness to convey youthfulness and optimism.

3.1.2 Strong and resonant tones: Applied in dramatic or intense moments, she can project emotions like sorrow, determination, or anger with greater impact.

For example, in "Shui Liao Huang Bang Zhong Zhuang Yuan", she begins with a soft, delicate tone to reflect the initial excitement of Feng Suzhen, who has just disguised herself as a man and won the title of Top Scholar. However, as the song progresses, she gradually strengthens her voice, adding depth and confidence to reflect the responsibility and determination of her new identity. This ability to adjust tone dynamically allows her to create a more nuanced and emotionally engaging performance.

3.2 Intensity Control: Creating Dramatic Contrast





Another key feature of Long Baoling's singing is her control over vocal intensity. By modulating volume and vocal power, she creates the contrast between soft and powerful moments, enhancing the emotional journey of a piece.

3.2.1 Soft, restrained singing: In introspective or sorrowful scenes, a character reflects on personal emotions or difficult situations.

3.2.2 Powerful, projected singing is used in moments of emotional climax, such as declarations of love, anger, or triumph.

For instance, Xiao Ci Dian's "Lai Lai Lai" begins in a gentle, subdued tone, drawing the audience into the character's internal struggle and sorrow. However, as the song climaxes, she increases her volume and vocal intensity, emphasizing the character's emotional outburst and determination. This technique is critical in opera storytelling, as it allows performers to mirror the natural ebb and flow of human emotions, making their delivery more relatable and engaging.

3.3 Phrasing Techniques: Enhancing Storytelling Through Rhythm

Long Baoling's mastery of phrasing techniques is a major contributor to the expressive power of her performances. She uses elongation, pauses, and rhythmic flexibility to shape the melodic expression of her singing.

3.3.1 Elongation: She stretches certain words or syllables to emphasize emotions or create suspense in storytelling.

3.3.2 Pauses: Well-placed silences add dramatic effect, allowing the audience to absorb key emotional moments.

3.3.3 Rhythmic variation: She slows down or speeds up phrases to align with the natural speech rhythm of the character's dialogue.

A great example is in "Jiang Shui Tao Tao" from Jin Yu Nu, where she elongates key phrases to reflect the father's deep love for his daughter. In contrast, she adds subtle pauses between words, heightening the song's sense of longing and emotional weight. Her phrasing techniques ensure that each word is sung and felt, drawing the audience deeper into the narrative and emotional experience of the performance.

As Table 5 shows, vocal modulation significantly shapes the emotional impact of Long Baoling's singing.

Table 5 Vocal Modulation and Emotional Expression in Long Baoling's Singing

Technique	Function	Effect on Performance
Tone Adjustment	Matches vocal timbre to emotion	Reflects the psychological state of the character





Technique	Function	Effect on Performance
Intensity Control	Adjusts power and volume	Creates contrast between soft and powerful moments
Phrasing Techniques	Shapes melodic expression	Enhances storytelling and emotional depth

3.4 Integrating Vocal Modulation with Ornamentation and True Voice

Long Baoling does not use vocal modulation in isolation. Instead, she seamlessly integrates it with ornamentation and true voice techniques.

3.4.1 True voice ensures vocal stability, allowing her to execute precise modulations without losing clarity or resonance.

3.4.2 Ornamentation, such as portamento and grace notes, adds fluidity to her modulated passages, making the transitions between soft and powerful moments more natural.

This holistic approach enhances her ability to deliver emotionally engaging performances, maintaining the authenticity of Huangmei Opera while incorporating refined vocal techniques.

3.5 Conclusion: The Power of Emotional Expression Through Vocal Modulation

Long Baoling's ability to modulate her voice is one of her most defining characteristics as a Huangmei Opera performer. By adjusting tone, controlling intensity, and shaping phrasing, she creates a deeply expressive and immersive experience for the audience. Her vocal modulation techniques allow her to:

3.5.1 Reflect the psychological depth of the character.

3.5.2 Enhance storytelling through subtle shifts in tone and rhythm.

3.5.3 Create dynamic contrast between soft and powerful vocal expressions.

Through her skillful integration of true voice, ornamentation, and vocal modulation, Long Baoling ensures that her performances are technically masterful, deeply moving, and emotionally engaging.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide an in-depth examination of the singing techniques of Long Baoling in Huangmei Opera, contributing to the ongoing discourse on vocal performance in traditional Chinese opera. Consistent with previous research on Huangmei Opera (Zhao & Sornyai, 2024; Chua, 2019), this study highlights the importance of breath control, vibrato, and portamento in shaping the distinctive lyrical quality of the genre. Long Baoling's ability to maintain clarity, resonance, and emotional depth aligns with earlier studies that emphasize the role of smooth,





natural vocal delivery in Huangmei Opera (Wang & Wen, 2024; Yu, 2024). However, while many contemporary singers have adapted a modernized vocal approach, Long Baoling preserves the traditional vocal techniques, reinforcing the authenticity of the art form while incorporating subtle refinements. This raises a debate on whether modernization enhances or diminishes traditional vocal aesthetics, as some scholars argue that contemporary adaptations risk diluting the core elements of regional opera (Feng & Suanmonta, 2024), while others believe they are necessary for cultural sustainability (Liu, 2022).

The results are consistent with theoretical principles in vocal music performance, particularly regarding expressive ornamentation and emotional phrasing. Malawey (2020) emphasized that effective singing involves technical precision and the ability to convey emotions through tone modulation and dynamic variation. Long Baoling's use of true voice, vibrato, and portamento aligns with these principles, demonstrating how technical mastery contributes to emotional storytelling in opera. Her controlled application of vibrato to enhance warmth and resonance mirrors previous findings on how vibrato is an expressive tool in operatic performance (Shewell & Sansom, 2024). Similarly, the strategic use of ornamentation, such as grace notes and dynamic shifts, echoes the insights of Zimmermann (2021), who argues that well-placed embellishments can heighten musical expressiveness without detracting from lyrical clarity. However, some scholars, such as Wang (2023), caution that excessive ornamentation may shift the audience's focus from lyrical interpretation to technical display, raising questions about the balance between expressive depth and vocal embellishment in modern performances.

This study also supports prior literature on the evolution of Huangmei Opera as a refined theatrical art form (Auerbach, 2021; Coerne, 2018). The shift from folk tradition to staged performances necessitated more sophisticated vocal techniques, which Long Baoling has successfully mastered and adapted. Her adherence to the genre's core elements, such as smooth phrasing and lyrical expressiveness, affirms Huangmei Opera's distinct identity within Chinese opera traditions. However, her incorporation of subtle refinements, such as increased breath support and controlled vibrato, suggests a nuanced evolution rather than a rigid preservation of historical styles. This aligns with Reid (2018), who argues that operatic singing development involves adherence to tradition and adaptation to contemporary aesthetics. Yet, other scholars argue that Huangmei Opera's accessibility is one of its defining characteristics, and excessive vocal refinement could create an artistic barrier between performers and audiences (Bardoe, 2019; Yuan, 2019). This perspective suggests that while technical precision is valuable, an overemphasis on refinement might distance the genre from its folk origins.

While this research affirms existing knowledge of Huangmei Opera, it also highlights areas where Long Baoling's singing techniques diverge from conventional practices. Unlike some





contemporary performers who prioritize light, ethereal tones, Long Baoling's consistent use of true voice provides a richer, more resonant quality (Morgenstern, 2018). This approach contrasts with the preference for falsetto in high-pitched sections observed in modern interpretations of Huangmei Opera (Zhang & Hu, 2023). Furthermore, her strategic use of dynamic contrast and phrasing, as seen in "Shui Liao Huang Bang Zhong Zhuang Yuan," demonstrates an advanced level of interpretative control beyond traditional stylistic expectations. Such techniques align with findings from Western operatic studies, which emphasize the role of phrasing in enhancing dramatic expression (Friddle, 2022). This raises an important debate on whether Huangmei Opera performers should incorporate more Western vocal techniques, such as bel canto, to refine their artistry further. While some argue that this could elevate the genre's technical demands and international appeal (Reid, 2018), others caution that it may compromise its distinct regional characteristics (Li, 2024; Wu et al., 2022).

Methodologically, the study's combination of performance analysis, interviews, and field observations provided a comprehensive understanding of Long Baoling's vocal artistry. The findings align with qualitative research approaches in music performance studies (Goldsmith, 2021; Merriam & Grenier, 2019), emphasizing the importance of in-depth, interpretive analysis. Spectrogram analysis and transcription software also provided measurable insights into vibrato frequency and melodic phrasing, supporting the study's objectivity. However, a limitation of this research is the focus on a single performer, which, while valuable for detailed analysis, may not fully capture the broader trends in Huangmei Opera vocal technique. Future studies could expand on this by comparing Long Baoling's approach with that of other leading performers, providing a more comprehensive perspective on stylistic variations within the genre. Additionally, further research could investigate the pedagogical implications of these findings, particularly in how aspiring performers are trained in vocal techniques. Some scholars emphasize the need for structured vocal curricula to ensure technical continuity in operatic traditions (Chen & Woramitmaitree, 2024), while others advocate for a more flexible, interpretative approach that allows for artistic evolution (Sun, 2023).

In conclusion, this study reaffirms the significance of traditional singing techniques in Huangmei Opera while highlighting how contemporary performers like Long Baoling innovate within established frameworks. Her vocal artistry balances tradition and modernity, ensuring that the genre remains relevant in an evolving cultural landscape. These findings contribute to ongoing ethnomusicology and vocal pedagogy discussions, offering valuable insights for performers, educators, and researchers. However, the debate remains about how modernization should shape Huangmei Opera's vocal techniques. While preserving authenticity is crucial, adaptation is also necessary for continued audience engagement and artistic growth. Further research is needed to





explore how vocal techniques can be adapted without compromising the authenticity of this cherished art form.

Suggestions

1. Suggestions for Applying the Research Findings

1.1 The findings highlight the importance of true voice singing, vibrato control, and expressive ornamentation. To ensure students develop a strong foundation in traditional vocal techniques, these elements should be systematically integrated into Huangmei opera training programs at conservatories and cultural institutions.

1.2 Educators and researchers can develop structured learning materials, such as instructional videos, annotated scores, and vocal exercises, based on Long Baoling's singing style. These resources would help preserve and transmit traditional Huangmei Opera techniques while allowing for controlled artistic innovation.

2. Suggestions for Future Research

2.1 Future research should compare Long Baoling's vocal techniques with those used in other Chinese opera forms, such as Peking Opera, Yue Opera, and Kunqu. This would provide insights into stylistic differences and how various operatic traditions have evolved in their vocal execution.

2.2 While this study focuses on vocal technique, further research could examine how audiences perceive and respond to traditional versus modern vocal adaptations in Huangmei Opera. This could help determine the role of vocal innovations in attracting younger audiences and sustaining the opera's relevance in contemporary performance contexts.

References

Auerbach, B. (2021). *Musical Motives: A Theory and Method for Analyzing Shape in Music*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197526026.001.0001>

Bardoe, C. (2019). *China: A History*. Abrams.

Chang, J., Seekhunlio, W., Chuangprakhon, S., Chen, Q., Santaveesuk, P., & Maphet, T. (2024). Reviewing the current status of the preservation of the Gannan Tea Picking opera. *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, 7(9), 2024184-2024184. <https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2024184>

Chen, C. L. (2021). Cultural product innovation strategies adopted by the performing arts industry. *Review of Managerial Science*, 15(5), 1139-1171. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-020-00393-1>





Chen, W., & Woramitmaitree, N. (2024). Vocal Techniques Literacy in Huai Opera for School-Based Education in Shanghai Municipality, China. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 12(1), 252-259. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.12n.1p.252>

Chi, C., Tanyapirom, S., & Panthupakorn, P. (2024). The Cultural Connotation of Literati Space During the Qianlong Period of China: Designing Contemporary Ceramic Products for Literati with Innovation. *International Journal of Sociologies and Anthropologies Science Reviews*, 4(3), 341-352. <https://doi.org/10.60027/ijssr.2024.4234>

Chua, S. P. (2019). Chinese Performing Arts. In *A General History of the Chinese in Singapore* (pp. 573-614). https://doi.org/10.1142/9789813277649_0026

Coerne, L. A. (2018). *The evolution of modern orchestration*. BoD-Books on Demand.

Feng, J., & Suanmonta, T. (2024). Preserving Literacy for the Transmission of the Traditional Folk Song "Hehuang Huaer" in Qinghai Province, China. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 12(3), 89-96. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.12n.3p.89>

Friddle, D. (2022). *Sing Romantic Music Romantically: Nineteenth-century Choral Performance Practices*. Rowman & Littlefield. <https://doi.org/10.5771/9781666911183>

Goldsmith, L. J. (2021). Using framework analysis in applied qualitative research. *Qualitative report*, 26(6), 2061-2076. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.5011>

He, X., & Sornyai, P. (2023). Cultural Studies and Heritage Education of Nanyin Performance Art in Quanzhou City, Fujian Province, China. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 11(4), 141-150. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.11n.4p.141>

Li, Q. (2024). A Study on the Functional Roles of Female Characters in Chinese Huangmei Opera Film and Television Dramas. *Journal of Roi Kaensarn Academi*, 9(10), 723-734.

Liu, S. (2022). *Xin Fengxia and the Transformation of China's Ping Opera*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009083508>

Malawey, V. (2020). *A Blaze of Light in Every Word: Analyzing the Popular Singing Voice*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190052201.001.0001>

Merriam, S. B., & Grenier, R. S. (Eds.). (2019). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.

Morgenstern, U. (2018). Towards the history of ideas in ethnomusicology: Theory and methods between the late 18th and the early 20th century. *Musicologist*, 2(1), 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.33906/musicologist.439321>

Peiheng, Z., & Kaewbucha, M. (2025). Managing the Rare Ethnic Art of the Baiku Yao at the Li Lake National Ethnic Art Museum and Learning Centre. *Interdisciplinary Academic and Research Journal*, 5(1), 505-524. <https://doi.org/10.60027/iarj.2025.278408>





Qi, S. (2018). *Adapting western classics for the Chinese stage*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315446165>

Reid, C. L. (2018). *The free voice: A guide to natural singing*. Oxford University Press.

Shewell, C., & Sansom, R. (2024). *Voice work: art and science in changing voices*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119933236>

Sun, Y. (2023). A Brief History of the Development of Huangmei Opera. *Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science*, 7(11), 2306-2310. <https://doi.org/10.26855/jhass.2023.11.029>

Wang, A. Y. (2023). Philosophizing time in sinitic opera. *Music Theory Online*, 29(3), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.30535/mtot.29.3.7>

Wang, T., & Wen, W. (2024). A Study on the Sameness and Uniqueness of Partial Tones in Huangmei Opera within National Tuning Systems. In *2024 2nd International Conference on Language, Innovative Education and Cultural Communication (CLEC 2024)* (pp. 481-490). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-263-7_59

Wang, Y. (2022). The Application of Opera Art in Music Therapy for the Aged. *Studies in Art and Architecture*, 1(1), 14-19. <https://doi.org/10.56397/SAA.2022.12.03>

Wu, H., Loo, C. F., & Chan, J. C. (2022). Visual Analysis of The Research Hotspots, Frontiers and Trends of Chinese Opera From 2011 To 2020. *Asian Journal of Arts, Culture and Tourism*, 4(4), 7-22.

Yu, H. (2024). Integration and Innovation of Piano Music within National Opera Culture: A Exploring Study. *Cultura: International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology*, 21(4), 106-121.

Yuan, K. (2019, October). Research on the Value of the Integration of Huangmei Operatic Culture into Kindergarten Education. In *2nd International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Ecological Studies (CESSES 2019)* (pp. 346-349). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/cesses-19.2019.81>

Zhang, L., & Hu, J. (2023). Pop music singing in education with modern innovative technologies: how the chinese language shapes the creation of popular singing. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 52(6), 2677-2691. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-023-10014-z>

Zhang, N. (2022). [Retracted] An Exploration of the Environment, Composition, and Transmission of the Development of Local Theater and Music in the Natural Environment and Folklore Activities of Tea Picking. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, 2022(1), 9491745. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/9491745>

Zhao, Y., & Sornyi, P. (2024). Education and Literacy in Yue Opera: Historical Development in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, China. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 12(1), 96-105. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.12n.1p.96>





Zimmermann, M. (2021). *The Ornamentation of Baroque Music: A Guide for Independent Embellishing*. BoD-Books on Demand.

