

The Analysis of the Singing Techniques in *The Wonderful Time is Coming* for First-Year Students at Xinghai Conservatory of Music, China

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the singing techniques of *The Wonderful Time Is Coming*, an aria from Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, and to develop instructional guidelines for first-year students at the Xinghai Conservatory of Music, China. A qualitative research design was employed with three purposively selected informants: two professors from Xinghai Conservatory and one lecturer from Guangdong Second Normal University. Data were collected through structured and semi-structured interviews, validated via the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method, complemented by literature review and practical vocal technique analysis. Content analysis identified key technical and expressive aspects of performance. Findings indicated that mastering breath control, diction, resonance, and the stylistic features of Mozart's soprano writing is essential for vocal accuracy and expressive authenticity. Based on these results, structured singing guidelines were developed,

including targeted breathing exercises, resonance enhancement techniques, emotional interpretation strategies, and pre-class preparation methods. These guidelines provide a pedagogical framework to improve vocal instruction effectiveness and support students' technical and artistic growth. The study offers both practical and theoretical contributions to vocal pedagogy, enhancing teaching approaches in Classical opera repertoire and providing replicable strategies for training young vocalists at the conservatory level.

Keywords: singing techniques, vocal pedagogy, breath control, Mozart aria, classical Opera

Statement and Significance of the Problems

The aria "*The Wonderful Time is Coming*" does not feature an extensive vocal range or present highly complex rhythmic patterns. However, it remains a challenging piece to perform effectively. From a pedagogical perspective, the aria holds significant value for novice and advanced singers. It plays a crucial role in characterizing Suzanne and emphasizing her distinctive traits. The compositional technique employed in this aria reflects the formal consistency and structural rigor typical of Classical period works. As such, it is particularly beneficial for the study and analysis of Mozart's vocal compositions from this era (Wang, 2021, p. 9).

In student performances of *The Wonderful Time is Coming* at the Xinghai Conservatory of Music, various technical difficulties were observed. These challenges were primarily evident in the declamatory section, where students encountered issues with rhythmic complexity and pitch accuracy. Furthermore, the phrasing in the aria section lacked smoothness, detracting from the musical

expressiveness. Additionally, the soprano passages were often deficient in clarity and brilliance, mainly due to insufficient technical control. The intricate rhythmic patterns and intonation demands in the recitative passages led to frequent deviations, while the disjointed phrasing impaired the overall musical continuity and interpretative depth.

The pedagogical value of *The Wonderful Time Is Coming* in higher music education is considerable. As one of the most compelling sections of Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, the aria has moved audiences with its lyrical beauty and expressive depth. It also possesses great educational relevance and practical utility in vocal training at the collegiate level. The aria presents students with a technically demanding vocal exercise, requiring refined breath control, dynamic tone modulation, and nuanced emotional expression. Students can develop vocal technique and artistic sensitivity through iterative practice and stylistic modeling.

Moreover, the aria's expressive musical language and dramatic narrative allow students to experience the intersection of music and theatrical performance. Students can attain a holistic understanding of the work's stylistic and emotional dimensions by analyzing its notes, rhythmic structures, and lyrical connotations. This enables them to portray the character's inner world and emotional evolution accurately. Beyond technical mastery, the aria also communicates profound humanistic values. It conveys love, freedom, resistance to authority, and moral courage. These thematic elements resonate with contemporary university students, encouraging a sense of patriotism, civic responsibility, critical reflection, and creative thinking.

In summary, *The Wonderful Time is Coming* is of notable significance in collegiate vocal training. It enhances students' technical proficiency and artistic

growth, fosters deeper insight into the relationship between music and drama, and promotes meaningful engagement with humanistic values. Motivated by these pedagogical concerns and artistic merits, the present study investigates the singing practice of *The Wonderful Time is Coming* at the Xinghai Conservatory of Music. It aims to analyze the vocal techniques associated with this aria and to propose improved instructional strategies. The findings are expected to serve as a valuable reference for vocal pedagogy, providing practical solutions to technical challenges and interpretative issues in similar Classical opera repertoire. Moreover, the study is anticipated to contribute to the enhancement of conservatory-level vocal training curricula, promote more effective teaching methodologies, and inspire further research in the integration of technical mastery with expressive interpretation. Ultimately, the outcomes of this research will not only benefit vocal instructors and students but also support the preservation and dissemination of Mozart's operatic artistry in contemporary music education.

Research Objective

1. To analyze the vocal techniques employed in the performance of *The Wonderful Time is Coming* by first-year students at Xinghai Conservatory of Music, China.
2. To develop instructional singing guidelines for *The Wonderful Time is Coming* for first-year students at Xinghai Conservatory of Music, China.

Research Methodology

Key Informants

The study involved purposively selected vocal music educators, professional performers, and first-year undergraduate voice students who had experience with the study, teaching, or performance of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, particularly the aria *The Wonderful Time is Coming*. In addition to faculty members, first-year students from Xinghai Conservatory of Music were included to provide first-hand perspectives on the technical and interpretative challenges encountered in learning and performing the aria. Informants were selected from among voice instructors at Xinghai Conservatory of Music, based on their academic qualifications, professional performance background, and experience in training undergraduate voice students. These individuals were considered credible sources for providing pedagogical insights and performance evaluations relevant to the aria. Their professional credentials and affiliations are as follows:

1. Professor Yang Yan

Professor Yang is a male tenor and a prominent vocal educator. He holds a degree from the Shenyang Conservatory of Music. Currently, he serves as the Director of the Vocal and Opera Department and a Professor and Master's Supervisor at Xinghai Conservatory of Music. With extensive expertise in operatic performance and pedagogy, Professor Yang has mentored numerous students who have won prestigious national competitions, including the China Music Golden Bell Award.

2. Associate Professor Ou Haiou

Associate Professor Ou is the Head of the Vocal Department within the Vocal and Opera Department at Xinghai Conservatory of Music. She earned her Master's degree in Vocal Performance from the Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine. Renowned for her lyrical and dramatic interpretations,

Professor Ou has received multiple accolades in international vocal competitions and is recognized for her emotionally rich and technically refined singing style.

3. Lecturer Yang Yujie

Lecturer Yang is a faculty member in the Department of Music at Guangdong University of Secondary Education. She holds a Master's degree from South China Normal University and is an active member of the Guangdong Vocal Association. Her teaching and research focus primarily on vocal pedagogy, and she has been recognized for her contributions through several national vocal performance awards.

4. First-Year Voice Students

A group of first-year undergraduate voice students from the Vocal and Opera Department at Xinghai Conservatory of Music participated as supplementary informants. They were currently enrolled in the vocal performance curriculum and had studied or performed *The Wonderful Time is Coming* as part of their coursework. Their contributions provided direct insights into the learning process, technical difficulties, and pedagogical impact of instructional strategies.

These key informants were selected for their pedagogical insights and practical expertise in operatic repertoire, ensuring the study's findings are grounded in professional experience and current educational practice.

Research Instruments

2.1 Interview

To gather in-depth qualitative data relevant to the research objectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted with vocal music professors from Xinghai Conservatory of Music and a lecturer from Guangdong Second Normal University.

The interviews focused on topics related to vocal techniques, singing breath control, and instructional strategies for teaching Mozart's aria 'The Wonderful Time is Coming.'

The interview process followed a structured development and validation procedure to ensure the quality and relevance of the instrument. The stages are detailed as follows:

2.1.1 Literature Review and Interview Design

Step 1: The researcher began by reviewing existing literature on vocal techniques related to 'The Wonderful Time is Coming,' focusing on breath control, tonal placement, articulation, and interpretive methods in Mozart's soprano arias.

Step 2: A preliminary set of interview questions was drafted based on the review to align with the study's research objectives.

2.1.2 Expert Review and Supervision Feedback

Step 1: The draft interview form was submitted to the thesis supervisor for review. Suggestions were made to enhance the clarity, focus, and coverage of the interview items, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives.

Step 2: The revised interview form was submitted to a panel of three field experts for validation using the Item-Objective Consistency (IOC) Index to determine whether each question was appropriately aligned with the intended research objectives.

The validation panel consisted of:

1. Assistant Professor Dr. Nathawat Khositditsayanan, expert in music education, Buriram Rajabhat University

2. Dr. Jiranuwat Khanthajan, lecturer and music education specialist, Buriram Rajabhat University

3. Dr. Rapeepol Lawongsa, lecturer and music education specialist, Buriram Rajabhat University

2.1.3 Quality Check and Index of Consistency (IOC) Evaluation

Step 1: The thesis supervisor further evaluated the interview form and interview guide suggestions for language precision, content relevance, pedagogical coherence, and clarity in addressing the aria's teaching objectives.

Step 2: Expert evaluation was conducted using the IOC formula, using the following scales:

+1 = The item aligns with the objective

0 = Uncertain alignment

-1 = The item does not align with the objective

All three experts scored each interview item. The final IOC value was 1.00, indicating complete agreement among the experts regarding the consistency between the interview questions and the research objectives.

2.1.4 Finalization of the Instrument

Based on expert feedback and IOC results, minor revisions were made to enhance phrasing and clarity. The final version of the semi-structured interview guide was then compiled and approved for use in the field study.

This rigorous development and validation process ensured the reliability, validity, and academic rigor of the research instrument, enabling the collection of rich, relevant data to inform the study's findings.

Data Collection

This study employed qualitative methods to collect data on the teaching and performance of Mozart's aria *The Wonderful Time is Coming* at Xinghai Conservatory of Music. Data were gathered through two principal methods: musical analysis and semi-structured interviews.

3.1 Musical Analysis

The researcher conducted a detailed analysis of *The Wonderful Time is Coming* focusing on: (1) Breathing techniques employed in soprano performance; (2) Pronunciation and diction, particularly regarding Italian phonetics and clarity of expression; (3) Vocal techniques, including legato phrasing, pitch control, and articulation; (4) Stylistic features of Mozart's soprano writing; and (5) The art of reciting lyrics rhythmically, essential for interpreting Classical-period arias.

This analysis served as a foundation for developing interview questions and contextualizing performance feedback from participants.

3.2 Interview Procedure

The primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with vocal music professors from Xinghai Conservatory of Music, a lecturer from Guangdong Second Normal University, and selected first-year undergraduate voice students from Xinghai Conservatory. The inclusion of students allowed the researcher to capture learner-centered perspectives, supplementing expert pedagogical views with authentic experiences of technical and artistic challenges.

The data collection process involved the following steps:

1. Formal Permission

The researcher obtained written authorization from the Graduate School of Buriram Rajabhat University to approach key administrators at Xinghai

Conservatory of Music and Guangdong Second Normal University. Permission was granted to contact and interview faculty members at these institutions.

2. Scheduling and Coordination

The researcher arranged interview sessions with the selected informants on dates and times mutually agreed upon. In addition to faculty interviews, separate small-group interview sessions were arranged with first-year voice students to encourage peer interaction and reflection as they discussed their learning experiences.

3. Conducting the Interviews

The interviews were conducted according to ethical and procedural guidelines as follows:

3.1 The researcher introduced themselves and clarified their academic affiliation and research purpose.

3.2 A relaxed and respectful atmosphere was established to encourage open dialogue.

3.3 The objectives of the study were clearly explained to each participant.

3.4 Pre-approved, semi-structured interview questions were used to guide the conversation.

3.5 Informed consent was obtained before audio recording or note-taking for research purposes.

All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed to ensure accuracy and alignment with the study's objectives. In addition to faculty interviews, separate small-group interview sessions were arranged with first-

year voice students to encourage peer interaction and reflection as they discussed their learning experiences.

Data Analysis

The data collected through interviews with both faculty members and first-year voice students were analyzed using content analysis, enabling the integration of professional pedagogical insights and student learning experiences into a cohesive thematic framework. The steps followed were:

4.1 Verification of Data Accuracy and Completeness

The researcher reviewed all transcripts and notes to confirm their reliability and consistency with the audio recordings.

4.2 Data Organization and Grouping

The responses were transcribed and grouped according to each interview question. Responses were categorized thematically for ease of comparison and interpretation.

4.3 Thematic Analysis and Interpretation

Themes were identified across the data set based on recurring patterns. These themes were then explained through contextual elaboration and interpreted to uncover underlying meanings related to teaching techniques, vocal performance strategies, and pedagogical challenges.

4.4 Descriptive Presentation

Findings were presented descriptively, supported by direct quotations from informants where appropriate, to provide rich and authentic insights into *The Wonderful Time Is Coming* teaching.

Results

The study examined the singing techniques in Mozart's aria *The Wonderful Time is Coming* and developed structured instructional guidelines for first-year voice students at Xinghai Conservatory of Music, China. The findings, derived from thematic content analysis of expert and student interviews combined with musical performance observations, are presented according to the two research objectives.

The Analysis of Vocal Techniques in The Wonderful Time is Coming
The vocal technique analysis highlighted four interconnected technical and expressive domains crucial for achieving a stylistically accurate and artistically compelling performance:

Breath Control and Management, Observations: Students frequently demonstrated shallow breathing and insufficient breath support, particularly in sustained legato phrases like “ti-vo-la-fron-te-in-co-ro-nar” and “in-co-ro-nar-di-ro-se”. This resulted in a loss of tonal stability, a tightening of the throat, and diminished resonance.

Expert Insights: Proper diaphragmatic breathing was emphasized as the foundation for sustained tone, smooth phrasing, and expressive delivery. Breath should be anchored in the lower abdominal region, allowing for rib cage expansion without excessive chest elevation. **Critical Passages:** Rhythmically intricate sections such as “giunse ai-fin il-mo-men-to” require agile breath control for rapid articulation without compromising tone. **Pedagogical Recommendations:** Incorporating breathing exercises that build stamina and teach students to manage breath reserves strategically across phrases.

Diction and Articulation, Observations: The clarity of Italian vowels and consonants, particularly in fast-moving phrases, was inconsistent. Multi-syllable words are often blurred, affecting both intelligibility and emotional impact.

Expert Insights: Precise diction enhances the communicative and dramatic effect of the aria. This is especially important for recitative-like passages, where textual clarity drives narrative momentum. Pedagogical Recommendations: Regular diction drills, phonetic transcription practice, and rhythmic text exercises were suggested to reinforce correct pronunciation and articulation patterns.

Resonance and Tonal Control, Observations: Inconsistent resonance was noted across registers, especially during transitions between head and chest voices. This caused sudden changes in timbre and reduced projection in the upper passages.

Expert Insights: Resonance serves both an aesthetic and functional role, contributing to tonal beauty, projection, and ease of singing. Proper head resonance ensures a ringing tone and minimizes strain. Pedagogical Recommendations: Resonance-building exercises, such as humming on sustained pitches and forward placement techniques, were recommended to unify tonal color.

Mastery of Mozartian Soprano Style, Observations: Students struggled to capture the elegance, agility, and balanced phrasing that define Mozart's soprano writing. Disconnected phrasing and uneven tone occurred in ornamented and extended runs. Expert Insights: Mozartian style demands clarity, precision, and expressive subtlety. The singer must balance technical discipline with dramatic interpretation. Pedagogical Recommendations: Exercises focusing on smooth legato transitions, accurate pitch in ornaments, and phrasing that reflects the dramatic intent of the text.

The Development of Instructional Guidelines. From the analysis, a set of comprehensive teaching strategies was developed to address the technical and interpretive challenges encountered by first-year students. These guidelines integrate physical, technical, and artistic training components:

Targeted Breathing Exercises, Diaphragmatic expansion drills to improve breath capacity. Controlled release exercises for sustained legato phrases. Rhythmic breath management for quick passages without tension. Diction and Pronunciation Drills, Italian vowel shaping for tonal clarity. Consonant precision through syllable-segmentation practice. Integration of text and rhythm through spoken-sung exercises. Resonance Development, Head and nasal resonance exercises for even projection. Placement awareness training to stabilize tone across registers. Emotional Interpretation Strategies, Lyric and character analysis to align vocal delivery with dramatic intent. Emotional mapping to plan dynamic and expressive shifts throughout the aria. Pre-Class Preparation Methods: Physical warm-ups to release tension. Mental visualization of phrasing and dynamics. Memorization routines for both music and text to ensure confident performance.

Conclusion of Results: The integration of these strategies into vocal training programs can significantly enhance students' technical command, stylistic awareness, and expressive capacity in Classical opera performance. The findings demonstrate that success in performing *The Wonderful Time is Coming* requires not only mastery of breath, diction, and resonance but also a deep understanding of Mozart's stylistic language and dramatic context. These results provide a pedagogical framework that can be adapted for a similar repertoire, contributing to both technical skill development and artistic maturity at the conservatory level.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the singing techniques of *The Wonderful Time is Coming*, an aria from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and developed instructional guidelines tailored for first-year voice students at Xinghai Conservatory of Music. The analysis identified four key technical domains essential for a refined performance: (1) effective breath control for sustained phrases and rhythmic agility, (2) accurate diction and articulation of Italian text, (3) consistent resonance and tonal stability across registers, and (4) mastery of Mozartian soprano style, balancing technical precision with expressive nuance. The instructional guidelines formulated from these findings address each challenge systematically through targeted breathing exercises, diction drills, resonance development techniques, interpretive strategies, and structured pre-class preparation. Implementing these methods in vocal training can significantly improve students' technical proficiency, stylistic understanding, and artistic expression. The study provides a replicable pedagogical framework for conservatory-level training in Classical opera repertoire, contributing to both academic scholarship and practical teaching applications.

Discussion

The findings underscore the necessity of integrating technical mastery with stylistic and expressive understanding in teaching Mozart's operatic repertoire. Breath control emerged as the foundational skill influencing tone quality, phrasing, and stamina. This aligns with Miller (1996), who emphasized diaphragmatic breathing as the cornerstone of classical singing, particularly in sustaining legato lines and managing dynamic contrast. The recurrent challenges in diction and

articulation mirror the observations of Stark (2003), who noted that linguistic precision is critical for communicating character intent and maintaining textual clarity in operatic performance. Resonance and tonal consistency were also significant factors, corroborating Sundberg's (1987) acoustic studies on vocal projection and timbral balance in classical singing. The difficulties students faced in register transitions highlight the pedagogical need for targeted resonance exercises, which Chen (2018) demonstrated to be effective in stabilizing tone and avoiding strain in high registers.

The stylistic demands of Mozart's soprano writing, characterized by elegance, agility, and balanced phrasing, require more than mechanical accuracy; they demand interpretive sensitivity. As supported by Caldwell, Wall, and Booth (2001), stylistic authenticity in Mozart performance relies on integrating musical line, text meaning, and character psychology. The emotional interpretation strategies suggested in this study—such as lyric analysis and emotional mapping—are consistent with the drama-based pedagogy proposed by Apfelstadt (1984), which improves students' expressiveness and audience engagement. Furthermore, the inclusion of first-year students as informants revealed the value of learner-centered feedback in refining teaching methods. This aligns with the findings of Davidson and Faulkner (2010), who argued that vocal pedagogy benefits from incorporating both expert and novice perspectives to address real-world learning challenges.

Suggestion

1. Implications of the Findings

1.1 Enhancement of Technical Proficiency: Applying the proposed guidelines can help students improve breath control, diction, and resonance, leading to higher technical accuracy in classical vocal performance.

12. Improved Interpretive Skills: Structured emotional interpretation training can enable singers to convey characters and narratives with greater authenticity and expressive depth.

2 Recommendations for Future Studies

2.1 Comparative Studies: Test the effectiveness of these instructional guidelines in different conservatories, both domestically and internationally, to evaluate adaptability and generalizability.

2.2 Longitudinal Research: Track students over several years to assess the long-term impact of structured vocal training on career progression and performance quality.

2.3 Cross-Cultural Vocal Pedagogy: Investigate the combination of Western classical techniques with Eastern vocal traditions to create hybrid training models that enrich cultural and stylistic versatility.

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