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VOCAL TECHNIQUES AND DIALECTS ON SELECTED NORTHERN SHAANXI FOLK SONGS

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LI LONG

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Time always slips away in a hurry, looking back on my doctoral career, there were too many difficulties. The sudden onset of the COVID-19 epidemic added some obstacles to the road of my study. After the epidemic was lifted, I am decide to go on my doctoral thesis after discussing it with my family, negotiating with my workplace, and overcoming difficulties in language, life, and other aspects. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Yap Jin Hin, he is a knowledgeable and patient teacher who is academically rigorous and has helped me a lot in writing my thesis. Secondly, I would like to thank my examiners, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kamarulzaman bin Mohamed Karim and Dr. Chiu, Ming Ying, for them sincere suggestions on revising my thesis. Moreover, I am very grateful to my external examers, Dr. Bernard Tan Yong Boon and Datuk Syafinaz Selamat, whose very practical suggestions have taught me a lot. Besides, I also would like to thank my family and friends for their support during my studies in Malaysia, which allowed me to devote myself to studies. In addition, I would like to express my special thanks to the school leaders and teachers for their help and to the school for providing a good learning environment. I am a person who is not good at expressing myself, but on my learning path, when I encounter difficulties, always get help from many people. I think I am the lucky one, At the same time, also understand that all gains require hard work. I cherish this learning opportunity even more and work harder than many students. I am eager to graduate as soon as possible and use more diligent work to repay the unit and the people who care about me. In the past few years of my Ph.D, I may have missed many opportunities to get together with family and friends, that I have gained extremely precious knowledge and abilities, which is the most important.

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ABSTRACT

Northern Shaanxi folk song refers to the folk song in the north of Shaanxi province, China, specifically YuLin City and Yan'an City. These folk songs serve as a genuine reflection of the emotions experienced by the local population, encompassing both moments of sorrow and joy as well as themes of love and hate. They encapsulate the multifaceted human experiences, offering a window into the profound depths of the people's lives in this region. This study focuses on researching the vocal techniques and dialect of northern Shaanxi folk songs. This study employs a practice-led research approach to bridge theoretical insights with practical performance strategies, offering a comprehensive understanding of vocal techniques and dialects of northern Shaanxi folk songs. Through research found that the vocal technique is not single but diverse of northern Shaanxi folk songs include "*高腔* (*Gao Qiang*)," "*平腔* (*Ping Qiang*)," glissando, trill, and staccato, among them "*Gao Qiang*" is representative. The northern Shaanxi dialect has a unique pronunciation compared with Mandarin; there are five basic characteristics, Chinese character reduplication, nasal sounds, special initial pronunciation, flat tongue and curled tongue words, decorative words. Among them, Chinese character reduplication are the soul word of the northern Shaanxi dialect, with local characteristics. This study will have certain reference significance for people researching northern Shaanxi folk songs, especially for people specializing in vocal. It aims to solve the vocal technique difficulties and summarize the characteristics of the northern Shaanxi dialects, thereby making a certain contribution to the better development and popularization of the northern Shaanxi folk songs.

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TEKNIK VOKAL DAN DIALEK DALAM LAGU RAKYAT TERPILIH SHAANXI UTARA

ABSTRAK

Lagu-lagu rakyat Shaanxi Utara ialah lagu-lagu rakyat yang berasal dari wilayah Shaanxi Utara, khususnya di Bandar Yulin dan Bandar Yan'an. Lagu-lagu rakyat ini mencerminkan pengalaman sebenar rakyat tempatan, merangkumi detik kesedihan dan kegembiraan, serta bertemakan cinta dan benci. Mereka menyimpulkan pelbagai pengalaman yang dialami manusia, juga memberikan tingkap untuk memahami kehidupan rakyat tempatan secara mendalam. Kajian ini memfokuskan pada teknik vokal dan dialek lagu-lagu rakyat Shaanxi Utara. Metodologi kajian ini adalah kajian literatur dan pendekatan practice-led, yang akan digunakan untuk menggabungkan teori dengan amalan untuk mendapatkan dapatan yang lebih teliti. Kajian mendapati bahawa teknik vokal bukan hanya satu sahaja tetapi merangkumi kepelbagaian teknik termasuk "*高腔* (Gao Qiang", "*平腔* (Ping Qiang)", glissando, trill, dan staccato. Gao Qiang merupakan ciri utama. Dialek Shaanxi Utara mempunyai sebutan yang istimewa berbanding dengan Mandarin, iaitu bahasa rasmi China. Lima ciri yang asas ialah: perkataan berganda, bunyi nasal, sebutan awal yang tersendiri, sebutan lidah rata dan lidah melengkung, perkataan hiasan. Perkataan berganda merupakan ciri utama kepada dialek Shaanxi Utara. Kajian ini penting bagi individu yang membuat penyelidikan tentang lagu-lagu rakyat Shaanxi Utara, terutamanya bagi individu yang pakar dalam vokal. Tujuannya adalah untuk menyelesaikan kesukaran yang dihadapi dalam teknik vokal dan meringkaskan ciri-ciri dialek Shaanxi Utara, menyumbang kepada pembangunan dan mempopularkan lagu-lagu rakyat Shaanxi Utara.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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1.1 Introduction and Background

Northern Shaanxi folk songs have had a long history rooted in the Loess Plateau since Zhou Dynasty (1046 B.C.-256 B.C.). Northern Shaanxi refers explicitly to Yan'an City and Yulin City, where its folk songs were passed down for dynasties as special ways for the locals to express their aspirations. Since ancient times, the daily lives of people in northern Shaanxi have formed a bond with folk songs. They sang for

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expressing emotions as well as for events such as weddings, harvests, funerals, and so on. The development and inheritance of northern Shaanxi folk songs mainly come to life, the folk songs vividly reflect life's joys and sorrows, giving birth to many touching stories on the vast Loess Plateau (Zhang, 2021). In short, they can all find emotional support in folk songs.

Northern Shaanxi folk songs developed rapidly from the late 1930s to the 1950s, during the period of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. People in northern Shaanxi expressed their feelings of separation by singing, which played an important role. Works of this period include "三十里铺 (*San Shi Li Pu*)," "兰花花 (*Lan Hua Hua*)," "走西口 (*Zou Xi Kou*)", and so on. From the founding of the People's Republic of China to its reform and opening up (1949-1978), it was another important development cycle. In order to celebrate the founding of the People's Republic of China, people created many classic northern Shaanxi folk songs, such as "高楼万丈平地起 (*Gao Lou Wan Zhang Ping Di Qi*)". After the reform and opening up, with the improvement of people's living standards and a higher demand for spiritual culture, the folk songs were further developed. The representative works include "走三边 (*Zou San Bian*)" and "黄土高坡 (*Huang Tu Gao Po*)".

In recent years, the development of northern Shaanxi folk songs has shown a prosperous scene, not only have new songs appeared one after another, but some old

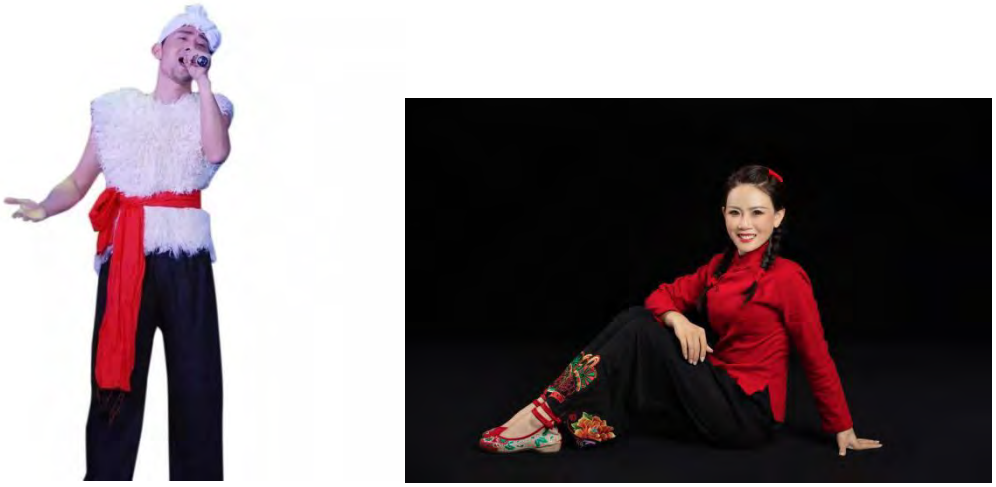
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songs have also been recovered and are afresh edited by the people. The folk songs, rich in rhythm and power, align with modern people's aesthetics, so they have developed relatively quickly (Qin, 2014). Original features: the lyrics are composed of traditional folk song melodies, and the tunes are often slightly changed due to new words. This type of song includes "*拥军花鼓* (*Yong Jun Hua Gu*)," "*秋收* (Autumn Harvest)," and so on. Up to date, the compositions have gone beyond the initial period of adapting the melodies of traditional folk songs but are personalized and closely follow the core characteristics of local music, and the length structure of new folk song is generally longer than the traditional (Bai, 2022).

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The singer in the performance usually puts on the singing role of the clothing. The traditional custom of the male is the northern Shaanxi local sleeveless jacket made of sheepskin, white shirt, scarf, and cloth belt; white or light yellow. The customary of female is braid, cloth shoes, and clothing in red, purple, and blue.



Picture 1.1 Common Performance Costumes for Male and Female

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Northern Shaanxi folk songs can be divided into three categories in terms of styles: "*信天游* (*Xin Tian You*)," "*号子* (*Hao Zi*)" and "*小调* (*Xiao Diao*)". "*Xin Tian You*" is a sole singing style without the accompaniment of instruments, usually features a single melody with multiple verses, the singer improvises in dependence on circumstances, while "*Hao Zi*" and "*Xiao Diao*" generally have instrumental accompaniments, the melody and lyrics are more standardized (Dong, 2012). "*Xin Tian You*" is usually performed informally, and singers rarely wear special performance costumes. It is to welcome friends and relatives and show hospitality. "*Hao Zi*" and "*Xiao Diao*" are usually sung on stage, and performers wear costumes and stage makeup.

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In the busy leisure or harvest season, three or five people sit together, freely talk, and casually sing the songs. This form of singing is generally more casual, and the lyrics are mostly improvised for expressing emotions. Therefore, farming leisure time or festival celebrations could be the materials of the folk songs.

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1.2 Inspiration and Motivation

In 2022, the "Northern Shaanxi Folk Song Talent Cultivation" project funded by the China National Arts Fund was held at Yan'an University of China, aiming to promote and carry forward northern Shaanxi folk song better, cultivate more senior talents in the field of northern Shaanxi folk song, and make contributions to the vigorous development of China's vocal. The researcher participated in the training for this project, which lasted 36 days for intensive teaching and one month for collecting styles and independent discussion and research. During the training, the team visited most parts of northern Shaanxi and participated in an exceptional performance of northern Shaanxi folk songs in the Yulin Grand Theatre. The whole team is deeply attracted by the unique charm of northern Shaanxi folk songs, which have unique charm and singing characteristics, and their performance art is unique.

Northern Shaanxi folk songs have beautiful melodies and unique vocal techniques, especially the "*高腔* (*Gao Qiang*)" vocal technique, which has aroused researcher's intense curiosity. The study found no research about the vocal technique in "*Gao Qiang*"; other vocal techniques, however, such as glissando, trill, and staccato, that appear in western classic vocal works have a huge number of references. Therefore, the northern Shaanxi folk song has significant research value. The study can not only improve the vocal techniques of the northern Shaanxi folk song but also

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improve the research results, which has a positive effect on the further development of the folk songs.

For those who are engaged in vocal filed of China, whether teachers or students, northern Shaanxi folk songs appear quite frequently in vocal textbooks and other works. After searching for relevant information, the researcher found that among the commonly used vocal textbooks in various universities in China, such as the book "*声乐（二）*Vocal Music 2," by Southwest Normal University Press, there is a northern Shaanxi folk song "*想延安* (Thinking of Yan'an)". In the book "*声乐基础实用教程* Practical Basic Course of Vocal Music," Southwest University Press (July 2022), there are four northern Shaanxi folk songs: "*南泥湾* (*Nan Ni Wan*)," "*绣金匾* (Embroidered gold plaque)," "*三十里铺* (*San Shi Li Pu* village)" and "*九里里山疙瘩十里里沟* (Nine miles of mountain bumps and ten miles of ditch)". "*民族声乐全集* Complete Collection of National Singing Songs," Shanxi Education Press, which includes songs such as the song "*羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* (Sheep towel with three blue lines)". In addition to the above examples, many more fully illustrate the importance of northern Shaanxi folk songs in Chinese vocal.

Northern Shaanxi folk songs give the fixed impression that they should be sung in the northern Shaanxi dialect, significantly limiting the promotion of the folk songs. However, the researcher found that the northern Shaanxi dialects are very

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distinctive, most of them are very similar to Mandarin, and only a few of them are not easy to understand. Based on this point of thinking, it would be helpful to summarize the representative features of the northern Shaanxi dialect and draw analogies between it and Mandarin, thus making it easier to understand the diction of the northern Shaanxi dialect.

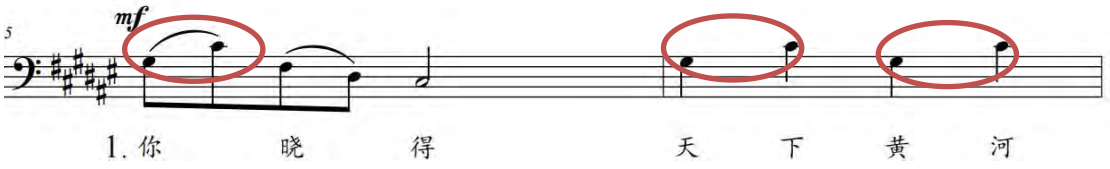
1.3 Problem Statement

The research found that for a considerable number of people singing northern Shaanxi folk songs, there will be a variety of issues, such as "*Gao Qiang*," "*平腔* (*Ping Qiang*)," glissando, trill, and staccato, the northern Shaanxi dialect and so on. Among these, the most common can be summarized into two aspects: The first issue is in the vocal technique; many singers are struggling with the vocal technique called "*Gao Qiang*". The origin of "*Gao Qiang*" is "*弋阳腔* (*Yi Yang Qiang*)", it is a Chinese opera of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) that is characterized by simple performances, popular lyrics, and high-pitched, exciting singing (Cai, 2012). "*Gao Qiang*" appears in many local folk songs in China, presenting different characteristics depending on the region. The "*Gao Qiang*" is integrated with the local folk song of northern Shaanxi to form a unique style. Which refers to the melody that appears in the northern Shaanxi folk songs with a large interval span (usually four degrees and above), higher pitch

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sung with real voice or a combination of real and falsetto voices, which is characterized by free rhythm, long and high-pitched, wide range, and with free prolonged tones, thus singing freely and spaciously (Zhang, 2021), common technique issues with "*Gao Qiang*" include voice breaking and the quality of the sound.



Example 1.1 "*Gao Qiang*" style of northern Shaanxi folk song

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Without "*Gao Qiang*," the artistic charm of northern Shaanxi folk songs will be significantly reduced. However, whether in teaching or performance, the northern Shaanxi folk song is rarely involved in the "*Gao Qiang*". This phenomenon is because it is challenging to master the "*Gao Qiang*," and there will be some psychological fear in teaching and performing, technical mishaps and dreaded memories can result from this fear. Despite the extensive documentation of glissando and trill in Western classical music, the unique vocal technique demands of "*Gao Qiang*" require localized methodologies that embrace subjective and embodied experiences of performers. Zecher, K (2018) said that some anxiety or fear related to an event originates from a previous unsuccessful attempt at a similar situation, as a matter of fact, high levels of performance anxiety are experienced by performers who cope with

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this kind of fear, they unintentionally ruin their own shows. In fact, their drive for success hurts their performances because it breeds tension, anxiety, high expectations, mistrust, and a lack of confidence. When the desire to perform and the fear of performing coexist, a mental conflict arises. Musically speaking, conflict can be defined as clashing polytonalities and discordant mental counterpoints. Put another way, someone wants to give a great performance on stage but also fears failing miserably.

> At times, physical symptoms that are associated with stage fright may reveal what the mind conceals. Dependence on one's body to function properly and fears that it will not due to technical or memory slips are hallmarks of stage fright fears and psychological remnants from the past, since the body is one's first and most important instrument (Nagel, 2017, P.60).

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During practice training and further in-depth thinking, the study found that "*Gao Qiang*" is far from challenging to master. How does one adjust vocal techniques when singing the "*Gao Qiang*," and improve people's confidence to sing the folk songs? Besides, some singers also have difficulty in singing "*Ping Qiang*," as well as techniques like glissando, trill, and staccato.

The second issue is the challenge with the diction of northern Shaanxi dialects. Modern northern Shaanxi folk songs are component songs in both Shanxi dialect and Mandarin, which basically retain words with typical dialect characteristics while other lyrics are sung in Mandarin (Dong, 2008). This maintains the original style and

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characteristics of folk songs and makes them understandable and acceptable to most people. For singers who are unfamiliar with the northern Shaanxi dialect, it is very challenging to pronounce accurately, but their Mandarin pronunciation is very good. Due to this issue, the study will distinguish the typical pronunciation characteristics of the northern Shaanxi dialect and compare these characteristics with Mandarin. Such as Chinese character reduplication, nasal sounds, and special initial consonants, etc., present both in tabular form so that the basic pronunciation characteristics of the northern Shaanxi dialect can be clearly understood at a glance and correctly grasped. In this way, it is easier for non-northern Shaanxi singers to understand the lyrics who learn northern Shaanxi folk songs can directly grasp the main characteristics of the dialect.

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1.4 Research Objectives

(1) To identify and practice the vocal techniques of northern Shaanxi folk songs.

To implement the vocal techniques of "*Gao Qiang*" in terms of voice leaps and switching between real and falsetto. To implement the vocal techniques "*Ping Qiang*," glissando, staccato, and trill in selected songs.

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(2) To practice the northern Shaanxi dialect and Mandarin in selected northern Shaanxi folk songs.

To implement the difference between the northern Shaanxi dialect and Mandarin. To compare training on the main characteristics of northern Shaanxi dialect and Mandarin on selected songs.

1.5 Research Questions

(1) Vocal techniques: How does one sing the northern Shaanxi folk songs with the correct vocal techniques?

(2) Diction: How does one use Mandarin and northern Shaanxi dialects when performing northern Shaanxi folk songs?

1.6 Program for Recital 1

In the program of recital 1, the study selected 12 songs according to the theme type: love, characters, life, and the Chinese revolution.

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Table 1.1

Recital 1 Program

No	Repertoire	Composer/Lyrics	Duration
1	*三十里铺* (*San Shi Li Pu*) San shi li pu Village	Unknown	3′
2	*二月里见罢到如今* (*Er Yue Li Jian Ba Dao Ru Jin*) I haven't seen you since February	Xiang Yin	4′
3	*上一道道坡下一道道梁*(*Shang Yi Dao Po Xia Yi Dao Liang*) Up a beam and down a slope	Unknown	3′
4	*挂红灯* (*Gua Hong Deng*) Hanging red lanterns	Unknown	4′
5	*小桃红* (*Xiao Taohong*) Xiao Taohong	Li Xingchi	4′
6	*山丹丹开花红艳艳* (*Shan Dan Dan Kai Hua Hong Yan Yan)* The flowers blooming on the mountain are bright red	Tang Keshen/Hong Yuan & Liu Weishi	6′
7	*黄河船夫曲* (*Huang He Chuan Fu Qu*) The Yellow River boatman's Song	Li Siming	4′
8	*赶牲灵* (*Gan Sheng Ling*) Driving a carriage	Unknown	2′
9	*九里里山疙瘩十里里沟* (*Jiu Li Li Shan Ge Da Shi Li Li Gou)* Nine miles of mountain bumps and ten miles of ditch	Lv Yuan	3′
10	*满天的花满天的云* (*Man Tian De Hua Man Tian De Yun*) The sky is full of flowers and clouds	Unknown	4′
11	*羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* (*Yang Du Du Shou Jin San Dao Dao Lan*) Sheep towel with three blue lines	Feng Xiaoquan	4′
12	*黄河里划桨船对船 (Huang He Li Hua Jiang Chuan Dui Chuan*) Rowing boat to boat in the Yellow River	Zhao Jiping/Bai Aying	4′
Total			45 minutes

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1.7 Program for Recital 2

Recital 2 was based on the recital 1, and the number of songs was increased by five in order to better perform Shaanxi folk songs, making the recital even richer.

Table 1.2

Recital 2 Program

No	Repertoire	Composer/Lyrics	Duration
1	三十里铺 (*San Shi Li Pu*) San shi li pu Village	Unknown	3′
2	二月里见罢到如今 (*Er Yue Li Jian Ba Dao Ru Jin*) I haven't seen you since February	Xiang Yin	4′
3	上一道道坡下一道道梁 (*Shang Yi Dao Po Xia Yi Dao Liang*) Up a beam and down a slope	Unknown	3′
4	挂红灯 (*Gua Hong Deng*) Hanging red lanterns	Unknown	4′
5	小桃红 (*Xiao Taohong*) Xiao Taohong	Li Xingchi	4′
6	山丹丹开花红艳艳 (*Shan Dan Dan Kai Hua Hong Yan Yan*) Morningstar lily bloom with brilliant red colour	Tang Keshen/Hong Yuan & Liu Weishi	6′
7	黄河船夫曲 (*Huang He Chuan Fu Qu)* The Yellow River boatman's Song	Li Siming	4′
8	赶牲灵 (*Gan Sheng Ling*) Driving a carriage	Unknown	2′
9	九里里山疙瘩十里里沟 (*Jiu Li Li Shan Ge Da Shi Li Li Gou*) Nine miles of mountain bumps and ten miles of ditch	Lv Yuan	3′
10	满天的花满天的云 (*Man Tian De Hua Man Tian De Yun*) The sky is full of flowers and clouds	Unknown	4′
11	羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝 (*Yang Du Du Shou Jin San Dao Dao Lan*) Sheep towel with three blue lines	Feng Xiaoquan	4′
12	黄河里划桨船对船 (*Huang He Li Hua Jiang Chuan Dui Chuan*) Rowing boat to boat in the Yellow River	Zhao Jiping/Bai Aying	4′
13	绣金匾 (*Xiu Jin Bian*) Embroidered gold plaque	Unknown	4′

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No	Repertoire	Composer/Lyrics	Duration
14	*一对对鸳鸯水上漂* (*Yi Dui Dui Yuan Yang Shui Shang Piao*) A pair of mandarin ducks floating on the water	He Guofeng	5′
15	*五哥放羊* (*Wu Ge Fang Yang*) Fifth brother herding sheep	Unknown	5′
16	*摇三摆* (*Yao San Bai*) Swaying when walking	Unknown	4′
17	*兰花花* (*Lan Hua Hua*) Lan Huahua	Wang Zhixin	7′
Total			70 minutes

1.8 Limitation

Singing northern Shaanxi folk songs in dialect has become a fixed impression in people's minds, many people think that folk songs in northern Shaanxi should be sung in dialect. However, for people who are non-natives of northern Shaanxi, especially people in southern China, it is not easy to sing in the northern Shaanxi dialect.

The repertoire of this research is limited to the region of northern Shaanxi due to its distinction in vocal performance and dialect compared to other regions in Shaanxi province. The selected songs also limit this study, there are many folk songs in northern Shaanxi, and only a few songs can be selected.

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Moreover, the research had limited information and good resources. Some information could only be learned through personal singing experiences, making the study difficult to develop.

Due to economic conditions and time constraints, recital accompaniment can only be based on the piano, it can only use two instruments with Chinese characteristics *SuoNa* and China *ZhuDi* accompaniment. The northern Shaanxi folk song art charm display has a certain limit, the repertoire was chosen mainly on the basis that I'm a tenor.

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Future research should be undertaken to explore more vocal techniques and the rich performances of northern Shaanxi folk songs. More work will be done later in the research.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW

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2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises a literature review, which will summarize the overall research situation of Chinese folk songs, undertake a regional review from large to small, and finally implement the theme of this study. The chapter summarizes the research results of northern Shaanxi folk songs, mainly from three aspects: vocal techniques, dialect, and performance. In addition, this chapter will outline the research on the history,

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geography, culture, and other aspects of northern Shaanxi. The literature review in the above aspects essentially includes all aspects of northern Shaanxi folk songs, which makes this study more rigorous.

2.2 China Folk Songs: Regional Differences

China is a country consisting of many nationalities, there are 56 nationalities in total, each nationality has its own unique culture and folk songs. Among them, the representative folk songs are Han folk songs, Tibetan folk songs, Mongolian folk songs, Uygur folk songs, Zhuang folk songs, and so on. They can be found all over China and have become unique representatives of Chinese culture. Northern Shaanxi folk songs are a part of Han folk songs, which is the most populous ethnic group in China, accounting for 91% of the country's population. Therefore, the number of Han folk songs is the largest proportion of Chinese folk songs, and the people who sing Han folk songs are also the largest in China's population. According to the characteristics and regional division of Chinese folk songs, they can be divided into five parts: northeast folk songs, southeast folk songs, southwest folk songs, central folk songs, and northwest folk songs.

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2.2.1 Northeast Folk Songs

Northeast refers to the region consisting of Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, and the Eastern Five Leagues of Inner Mongolia. Objective factors such as the economic environment, natural environment, educational conditions, and historical background of this region help to produce northeast folk songs.

Northeastern folk songs were first created by the working people of the northeastern region as a result of improvisation and humming, and the people of the northeast passed them on by word of mouth, so they became very popular. The lyrics are the communication dialect for life in the northeastern region, direct and humorous, and the style of singing is also more exaggerated (Yang, 2022). Fishing, hunting, herding, and agriculture, as important activities in the production and development of the people of northeast China, have a direct impact on the creation of the content in folk songs. The industries of fishing, hunting, and nomadic herding, which used to be the main industries in the northeast, not only became the main subject matter and important artistic element for the creation of northeast folk songs by the various ethnic groups in the northeast, but also the main symbol that distinguishes northeast folk songs from other folk songs (Han & Hu, 2024). Yangko is enthusiastic and contagious, which has become the main form of festival singing and dancing for

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northeastern Chinese people. Since then, it has also become one of the main types of folk songs in northeast China and is deeply loved by their people (Han & Hu, 2024).

The cheerful and humorous character of northeastern people means northeast folk songs also have these characteristics, which can be said to be the real portrayal of northeastern people's lives and the direct expression of their thoughts and feelings. In the folk songs, we can directly feel the joys and sorrows of the people living in this area, and the unique bold, witty, and cheerful character of the northeastern people (Liu, 2023). For example, the song "*小拜年* (*Xiao Bai Nian*)" reflects the characteristics of northeast folk songs.

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Example 2.1 "*Xiao Bai Nian*"

Northeast folk songs, as an artistic symbol that reflects the true emotional appeal of the people, also have produced a large number of songs that tell the story of the bullying and oppression of the northeast Chinese people by foreign enemies and express the miserable conditions of their existence. On the other hand, the consciousness of the northeastern people to resist aggression as never before at that stage, and many songs of the northeastern people's defense against foreign enemies were created (Han & Hu, 2024), the song "*松花江上* (*Song Hua Jiang Shi*)" is an example of this.

The vast land, abundant resources, and unique national culture of the northeast have created the straightforward, cheerful character of the people there. This character trait has also been integrated into and penetrated into the cultural symbols representing the northeast (Yang, 2022). Over time, the singing art style of

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northeastern folk songs emerged, and the rhythm is mostly four-two and four-four beats. They often have the rhythmic characteristics of soft start and punctuation and have a highly colloquial music style, and melodies of northeastern folk songs are fresh and clear, with regular rhythms. The melody often has four-degree melodic intervals, with more emphasis on the use of minor third intervals, this feature is consistent with the characteristics of northeastern people, who speak in a higher pitch and like to draw out long sounds (Yang, 2022).

Northeast folk songs are mainly divided into three categories: first, native folk songs, there are "*短调* (*Duan Diao)*" and "*长调* (*Chang Diao*)". The "*Duan Diao*" has a regular rhythm and a smooth melody, while the "*Chang Diao*" is loud and bright with a free rhythm (Sun, 2021). The second is a song with a dance, which is mainly performed by one leader and the whole crowd. The third is "*萨满调* (*SaMan* tune)," which is religious music, "*萨满教* (*SaMan* religious)" is used in various rituals to sing prayers, such folk songs are related to traditional customs and ethnic beliefs in northeast China (Wang, 2016). The songs "*十五的月亮* (*Shi Wu Di Yue Liang*)," "*我爱你塞北的雪* (I love you *Sai Bei`s* snow)"(*Example 2.2*)"*辽河水从我家门前流过* (The water of the *Liao* River flows from my home)," "*想给边防军写封信* **(**Want to Write a letter to the Border Guards**)**" and other songs show the spirit of the northeast people and are representatives of northeast folk songs.

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Example 2.2 "*我爱你塞北的雪* (I Love You *Sai Bei`s* Snow)"

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2.2.2 Southeast Folk songs

Southeast region: refers to the region located in the southeast of China, including Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Fujian, Taiwan, Jiangxi, Anhui, Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, and other places. The terrain is mainly mountains and hilly, generally referred to as the southeast hills. The folk songs of the southeast region, known for their beautiful, melodious, gentle, graceful, light, and soft tunes, possess unique characteristics distinct from those of northeast and northwest folk songs.

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The mainly folk songs in the southeast that are cheerful, lively, and sing about a better life, reflecting the cultural characteristics to the south of the Yangtze River, it is in stark contrast to the sadness of northwest and northeast folk songs. According to the music genre, it can be roughly divided into "*Hao Zi*", southeast folk songs, and "*Xiao Diao*". "*Hao Zi*" is a folk song that directly accompanies physical labor and closely coordinates with the labor rhythm. It is produced in the process of labor, directly for the production of labor services, and is a true reflection of labor conditions and workers' mental outlook. Labour "*Hao Zi*" is a folk song produced and applied to labor that has the practical function of coordinating and directing labor. In the process of labor, in particular the collective cooperation of strong labor, in order to unify the pace, regulate breathing, and release the pressure of the body load, workers often shout or sing Labour "*Hao Zi*". These shouts and cries "*Hao Zi*" were gradually beautified by the working people and developed into songs. The main singing style of "*Hao Zi*" is the "领和 (*Ling He*)" style (*Picture 2.1*), that is, one person leads the chorus. The singing forms of "*Hao Zi*" include solo singing, duet singing, unison singing, etc., but the most common and typical singing way is to lead the chorus, and the leader is usually the leader of the laborers.

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Picture 2.1 The "*Hao Zi*" Performance

In southeast folk songs, there is a very representative song called "*小山歌* (*Xiao Shan Ge*)," which depicts the southeast area. In the melodic progression of "*Xiao Shan Ge*," there are often various kinds of decorative notes, which add euphemistic and beautiful colors to the melody. The melodic rhythm of "*Xiao Shan Ge*" is influenced by the rhythm of the dialect, and the syncopated rhythm type often appears in the melody (Zhang, 2023). For example, the Shang Hai folk song "*郎唱山歌像铜铃* (*Lang Chang Shan Ge Xiang Tong Ling*)".



Example 2.3 "*郎唱山歌像铜铃* (*Lang Chang Shan Ge Xiang Tong Ling*)"

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Southeast folk songs are songs that people sing for self-entertainment in various individual tasks such as walking, chopping firewood, grazing, and mowing grass due to the free rhythm and beautiful melody. The rhythm of the "*Xiao Diao*" is regular, and the rhythm type is rich and varied. The forms are mainly solo singing, followed by antiphonal singing and a chorus, the representative folk songs of southeast China include "*孟姜女* (*Meng Jiangnv*)," "*五更调* (*Wu Geng Diao*)," "*无锡景* (*Wuxi* Scene)," "*八月桂花遍地开* (*Ba Yue Gui Hua Bian Di Kai*)" and others. Some provinces in the southeast are near the sea, so there are some common songs, such as the fishing song, which is a kind of folk song sung by fishermen in coastal, lake and harbor areas. For example, "*海丰* (*Hai Feng*)" and"*陆丰* (*Lu Feng*)," which are popular in Guangdong Province, are collectively known as "*Hai Feng*" fishing songs (Li, 2013).

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2.2.3 Southwest Folk Songs

The southwest region includes Chongqing Municipality, Sichuan Province, Guizhou Province, Yunnan Province, and Tibet Autonomous Region. The Sichuan Basin is the most densely populated, the most convenient transportation location and the most economically developed part of the southwest region. Therefore, the Sichuan and the Tibetan folk songs are the most representative in southwest.

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Folk songs in the southwest can be separated into four categories: "*Hao Zi*," "*Xiao Diao*", mountain songs and children's songs. According to the singing method, can be separated into "*Gao Qiang*" folk songs, "*Ping Qiang*" folk songs, and "*矮腔* (*Ai Qiang*)" folk songs, which are not wide, the rhythm is neat, there is no delay, and most of the songs are sung with a real voice (Ma, 2016). The general characteristics of folk songs in the southwest are standardized and neat, beautiful melody, unrestrained, relaxed, cheerful, vigorous, never dragging, etc. Some regional folk songs start with the highest note of the whole song to express their feelings directly, typical folk songs include "*槐花几时开* (*Huai Hua Ji Shi Kai*)," (*Example 2.4*) "*小河淌水* (*Xiao He Tang Shui*)," "*青藏高原* (Qinghai-Tibet Plateau)," (*Example 2.5*) "*洗衣歌* (Laundry Song)", and so on. "*喊腔* (*Han Qiang*)" is another characteristic that is similar to a rap form, but the range is usually folk songs. It originates from the intonation of speech in life and organically combines the intonation of speech with the melody of singing, making the singing image more specific and the effect more vivid. Representative works such as "*川江号子* (*Chuan Jiang Hao Zi*)" and "*船工号子* (*Chuan Gong Hao Zi*)" are also a kind of folk singing form led by the horn player and sung by the chorus of the boatmen to unify the movement and rhythm (Ma, 2016).

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Example 2.4 "*槐花几时开* (*Huai Hua Ji Shi Kai*)"



Example 2.5 "*青藏高原* (Qinghai-Tibet Plateau)"

2.2.4 Central Folk Songs

The central region refers to the six provinces of Shanxi, Henan, Anhui, Hubei, Jiangxi,

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and Hunan, which are located in the central part of China and play an important role in the geographical location of China, similar to the existence of the "waist" in the composition of a human body.

The Singing of different types of folk songs needs to be transformed based on local language and phonological characteristics, so the connotation of their expression can be correctly interpreted. The central folk songs are closely related to their language habits, generally, their intonations fluctuate greatly, and their tunes are short and concise, this is a reflection of the local life, culture and spirit of the people of all ethnic groups and reflects their cultural characteristics and living customs (Yang, 2015).

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Most of the lyrics in the central region come from the working and production scenes of the working people (Hou, 2018). They are easy to understand, cordial and natural, integrate with people's lives, and work with high artistic value. In this region, traditional folk songs are mainly sung by real voices, but with the continuous improvement and change of people's artistic appreciation level. There are further requirements for folk songs, and the traditional real voice singing method is difficult to meet people's requirements, so the application of the falsetto singing method is strengthened. The original songs of the central folk are short and concise, with only one paragraph of content in each song, the selection and expression techniques of the

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song are relatively simple and concise. With the needs of the times, folk songs in the central region are good at changing, and they can also adapt to different occasions and different singing methods (Hou, 2018). It can be seen that the songs have strong adaptability, the rhythm has national and regional characteristics, and the melody and language of the songs are very strong. The melody of the folk songs in the central region is mostly high and low, and the style is cheerful.

Hunan folk songs are typical representatives of folk songs in this area, the rhythm pattern maintains the singularity and unity, mostly four-two beats and four-four beats, this kind of beat has a strong sense of rhythm and power. Some Hunan folk songs often have a fixed rhythm pattern that runs through the whole song, they play the role of highlighting the music theme and deepening the music image, and leave a deep impression on people (Li, 2015). The characteristics of Hunan folk songs are their long tones, the free use of real and falsetto during singing, and the use of falsetto in high-pitched areas (Zhou, 2009). In terms of scale modes of Hunan folk songs, the "*湘江* (*Xiang Jiang*)" boatmen's chants mostly use the "*羽* (*Yu*)" mode of the tetra tonic scale and pentatonic scales (Li, 2015). The representative folk songs in the central region include "*浏阳河* (*Liuyang* River)," "*编花篮* (*Bian Hua Lan*)," (*Example 2.6*) "*龙船调* (Dragon Boat Tune)," "*桃花红杏花白* (Peach blossom red and apricot Blossom and White)," "*洗菜心* (*Xi Cai Xin*)" and so on.

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Example 2.6 "*编花篮* (*Bian Hua Lan*)"

2.2.5 Northwest Folk Songs

Northwest is an inland region of China, including Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, western Inner Mongolia, and Shaanxi. Northwest folk songs refer to those popular in the region, among them, "*花儿* (*Hua Er*)" and "*Xin Tian You*" (*Example 2.7*) are the most representative. "*Hua Er*" (*Example 2.8*) is a type of northwestern folk song characterized by large melodic ups and downs, with more fourths in the upper line

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and more falsetto in the high register. Northwest folk songs give people a high and simple feeling, there are many big leap intervals and a wide range of sounds, so it is very difficult to sing completely in real voice. Therefore, when excellent singers sing "*Xin Tian You*" or "*Hua Er*", the representatives of the northwest, they sing with different timbres according to the different vocal ranges of the specific songs (Cao, 2011).

The northwest regional folk songs are closely related to the geographical form and historical environment of the region (Chen, 2011). Geographical form and historical environment have created the common regional mentality of people in this region, and the common mentality has formed the national character of a region, which has a very profound impact on the style of folk music (Ma, 2017). Northwest folk songs do not contain any subtle and tortuous expressions, but only the direct expression of inner feelings. The melody is characterized by poignancy, and there is some bitterness and sadness in the song that cannot be wiped away (Shi, 2011).

> The Northwest China dialect uses many Chinese character reduplication, and these vivid and imaginative Chinese character reduplication in the music enhance the fun and life atmosphere of the songs. The characteristic of the long tone of northwest folk songs is that the sound quality is thick and not frivolous; the volume is always maintained, or it is crescendoed, and it is generally kept straight during singing, but there are no other decorations. In addition, the ends of phrases in northwest folk songs or phrases ending with a long sound are often decorated with glissando and other decorations. Due to

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the high pitch range, the end of the phrase is mostly a down glissando (Cao, 2011, p. 65).

The most obvious characteristic of the melody line of northwest folk songs is the use of the four-degree and above the big hop interval, and it gives people a high, simple, and washed feeling, because of the large leap interval and wide vocal range, folk singers with real voices are often not competent (Xie, 2022). In the northwest mountain valley's deep terrain, to make the voice sing high and spread far, they must rely on falsetto.



Example 2.7 "*兰花花* (*Lan Hua Hua*)"

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Example 2.8 "*上去高山望平川* (*Shang Qu Gao Shan Wang Ping Chuan*) "

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2.3 The Geographical of Northern Shaanxi

The geographical scope of northern Shaanxi includes the two cities of Yan'an and Yulin (*Picture 2.2*). Geographically, northern Shaanxi occupies the central area of the Loess Plateau, it has a monsoon climate with sparse precipitation and strong evaporation. The climate is relatively arid, and the temperature difference between day and night is large, affected by polar dry air masses in winter and spring, it is cold, dry, and windy. Summer and autumn are affected by the subtropical high pressure in the western Pacific Ocean and the low pressure in the Indian Ocean, which are hot

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and rainy. The soil moisture content is low in the whole region of northern Shaanxi, and the vegetation is sparse and the soil is relatively infertile (Huo, 2012).

> Terrain from northwest to southeast tilt, northwest high, southeast low. Geologically, it is formed on a paleotopographic foundation composed of Mesozoic bedrock, covered with Cenozoic late rite and thick layer loess, and then cut by flowing water and soil erosion. In general, the natural conditions in northern Shaanxi in ancient times were relatively better than those in modern times. After the Song and Yuan Dynasties (1271-1368), the natural conditions began to deteriorate, especially the military reclamation and immigration policies since the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which resulted in long-term deforestation of forests, unrestrained reclamation of grasslands, and continuous soil and water loss. Soon with the worsening of the disaster and broken, so that, since the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912), northern Shaanxi has been reduced to "barren mountains poor and steep, the water is bad tiger Wolf roar, April catkins thick, mountain flowers not beautiful, the wind from which to distinguish between night and day" (Li, 2013, p. 12).

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The basic geomorphic types are primitive, knolls and valleys are typical Loess Plateau forms preserved after geological changes, vegetation destruction, rain erosion, and valley segmentation, so there are many hills. Now, due to the national policy of "退耕还林 (returning farmland to forest)", the geographical environment has gradually improved, but the traces of the history of indiscriminate felling are still clearly visible.

The natural environment has a huge impact on people, for example, when northern Shaanxi people considered the location of their houses, they chose to live on

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the Loess Plateau or halfway up the mountainside near a water source, and villages were often scattered throughout the valley and halfway up the mountainside with water sources. There are often scattered villages, and villages are small and households are dispersed. Northern Shaanxi folk songs are a form of togetherness and convergence of the specific regional environment and humanities, history, society, time, and space, the geographical environment further affects the folk songs (Liu, 2011). All counties and districts in northern Shaanxi have post-nasal consonants, and they often read the Mandarin sounds starting with "a, o, e" (except *er*) as post-nasal consonants, making them nasalized, this is closely related to the geographical environment characteristics of northern Shaanxi. Environmental factors such as sparsely populated areas and a lack of soil and water have led to an increase in the pressure of the breath needed to pronounce the words spoken by the people of northern Shaanxi. When shouting is required to hear the other party's voice, the breath from the abdomen will violently hit the vocal cords and go straight into the nasal cavity, forming the habit of nasal pronunciation (Li, 2018).

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Picture 2.2 Shaanxi Province Map

2.4 The Culture of Northern Shaanxi

Northern Shaanxi culture is the culture with regional and national characteristics created jointly by the people of all ethnic groups in northern Shaanxi on the specific Loess land of the northern Shaanxi Plateau (Wang & Li, 2005). The land of northern Shaanxi was desolate and poor a century ago, the natural environment of poor

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mountains and bad water makes people in northern Shaanxi have a kind of spirit of fighting against heaven and earth (Shi, 2013). Local people call this spirit the "*黄土精神* (loess spirit)", which means the spirit that dares to fight against all kinds of difficult challenges and overcomes everything.

White is the main color of the clothes of the northern Shaanxi people, wearing a bare white sheepskin coat, a white sheep waist towel, and a head handkerchief is a distinctive feature of the northern Shaanxi people's clothes. Because northern Shaanxi is often drought and dusty, and the poor often work in the mountains and fields, they tie a white towel into a knot and wrap it around their heads. It can block sand and dust, block the sun, and wipe away hot sweat, it has multiple uses and is also called "*白羊肚手巾* (*Bai Yang Du Shou Jin*)" (Wang & Li, 2005).

> The formation of clothing in northern Shaanxi was influenced on the one hand by the ancient ethnic minorities in the north, which formed the habit of white sheepskin jackets and white turbans, and on the other hand, it was related to the agricultural production and climate in northern Shaanxi. Sheepskin has a very good effect on cold insulation, and it has become a custom to use sheepskin as a raw material to make a big jacket. The northern Shaanxi region is located in the continental interior, where the day and night temperature difference is large, the head is very easy to get cold, so it slowly formed the habit of wrapping the headscarf (Huo, 2012, p. 21).

With its long history and profound cultural accumulation, various forms of folk art have been formed and retained in northern Shaanxi, and its distinctive folk

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culture features, such as folk songs, waist drums, paper cuttings, window holes, etc., have been widely influential at home and abroad. This rich culture is not only the highlight of the industry but also the soul of the whole cultural development of northern Shaanxi. While reflecting the survival and philosophical thoughts of northern Shaanxi people in ancient times, these folk arts inherit and create the folk art of northern Shaanxi (Shi, 2013).

Food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and material needs, as the first need of life, they not only meet people's material needs but also the cultural impressions of different regions and nations. The ruggedness and boldness of people in northern Shaanxi are roughly reflected in three aspects: first, they speak with a loud voice and express their ideas directly, without beating around the bush; second, they treat people sincerely and are hospitable, and they must drink alcohol and get drunk before they stop; thirdly, folk art is free and unrestrained, vigorous, rough, and majestic (Huo, 2012).

Regarding the culture of marriage and funeral society in northern Shaanxi, the marriage was arranged by "parents order and matchmaker's words" and "no matchmaker could not get married", matchmakers played a very important role in the marriage. In the past, for people in northern Shaanxi, men marrying women paid attention to the family official, rich families and poor families did not get married

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(Wang & Li, 2005). They had to use songs to express their dissatisfaction with feudal marriage and the pursuit of love, so the folk songs that northern Shaanxi people like to sing are about love.

After the deaths of relatives, people in northern Shaanxi pay attention to the "buried", they prefer wood coffin burial, and the soul returns to the yellow land. Festival celebration culture, folk songs, Yangko dance, and so on—they are the symbolic cultures of northern Shaanxi. The regional geographical environment of gully, drought, sand, and cold tides in northern Shaanxi promotes the accumulation and retention of ancient culture and, at the same time, creates the "*黄土精神* (Loess Spirit)" in which the people there bear hardships, live in poverty and enjoy their way of life with some bitterness and contradictions, which is fully reflected in the daily diet and residence of the people of northern Shaanxi and the literature (Zhao & Su, 2015). Historically, it is close to ancient Chang'an and has been deeply influenced by traditional culture and traditional etiquette. Meanwhile, the relatively closed, backward, and poor natural conditions and living reflect the unique "*黄土精神* (Loess Spirit)" in the literature of northern Shaanxi, which shows the history, present and future. The self-respect, self-strengthening, and free-life attitude of people in northern Shaanxi and their openness, pluralism and inclusiveness are key traits. In history, the construction of Qin Straight Road had an early and far-reaching impact on cultural diversity, openness, and inclusiveness.

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The cultural style of worshiping literature, being practical and martial is inseparable from the northern Shaanxi people's open-minded, pragmatic outlook on life, simple economic consciousness, loyalty, courage, the national spirit, and moral code cultivation (Zhao & Su, 2015).

2.5 The Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs

The northern Shaanxi folk song has typical regional characteristics and is a representative cultural symbol in northwest China, the folk songs are bold and directly reflect the cultural life and customs of the region, the basic characteristic is the direct freedom of the music (Wu & Hou, 2022). For thousands of years, the people of northern Shaanxi, living on this land, have learned to sing to alleviate the pressure of the harsh environment on their lives during the course of their suffering. People learned to use singing to express their feelings, to sing and praise life, thus naturally creating a unique music culture with a Loess flavor—northern Shaanxi folk songs (Liu, 2011).

Northern Shaanxi folk song is a kind of Chinese folk song widely spread in northern Shaanxi. It is the spirit of the Han working people's thoughts, feelings, and crystallization. The folk songs are divided into three categories: "*Hao Zi,*" "*Xin Tian*

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You" and "*Xiao Diao*" (Dong, 2012). "*Xin Tian You*" is one of the most distinctive types of folk songs in northern Shaanxi, as the name suggests, it is a song about roaming freely in the vast nature of the sky and the earth (Liu, 2011).

The special environment and cultural state of northern Shaanxi determine the connotation and structural characteristics of the folk songs and also influence the style of the folk songs. It is of great significance to analyze the form structure of folk songs in northern Shaanxi to understand the music culture and the excellent tradition of folk art in this area. The form of northern Shaanxi folk song is relatively simple and it has a lot of similarities with folk music structures in other regions in terms of the integrity of the form structure.

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The formation and development of northern Shaanxi folk songs are not only related to the topography and landscape but also closely related to some of the vegetation coverage and river network. In places where the grass and trees are more luscious, people often create "*Xiao Diao,*" while in some areas where the climate is more severe and the vegetation is seriously damaged, most of the music created by the people is based on the theme of sadness (Su, 2020). It can be seen that vegetation cover is often a source of inspiration for people's musical compositions. In the early days of collective labor alongside the river, people relied on the leader of the workers to shout slogans, and slowly they discovered that shouting slogans helped them to

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work together, improved their physical efficiency, united the whole team, and boosted their morale (Su, 2020). Through inheritance and development, it was gradually transformed into what is now known as the labour "*Hao Zi*".

Northern Shaanxi folk songs vividly describe the folk culture, such as clothing, food, residences, weddings, and funerals. These are the ups and downs that the people of northern Shaanxi have walked on the Loess land, leaving footprints before and after their lives (Wang & Li, 2005). The subjects of the northern Shaanxi folk songs are related to humanities and geography, local customs, traveling and earning a living, wedding customs, life's pleasures, clothing and food, labor and production, and so on. The lyrics may describe forms of labor such as job hunting, shepherding, and boat work. The northern Shaanxi folk songs embody the people's sense of struggle in northern Shaanxi and embody the spirit of the people in northern Shaanxi's struggle against nature and feudal traditions (Hu, 2008). Northern Shaanxi folk songs are full of empty and sad melodies, which contain the contradiction between depression and boldness, the entanglement between suffering and happiness, and the dilemma between fate and struggle (Su, 2020).

Northern Shaanxi folk song is high-pitched and rough, melodious and simple, and enthusiastic. Its core mode is the "徵 (*Zhi*)" mode and the "商 (*Shang*)" mode,

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the most common is the "徵 (*Zhi*)" mode, they both belong to the Chinese national mode, the "徵 (*Zhi*)" mode usually ends on"Sol", while the" 商 (*Shang*)" mode ends on "Re". The melody is superimposed in double fourth degrees or even in third and fourth degrees, and the sound range is extremely wide. When singing the folk songs, local singers mostly use their real voices to sing, and the real voice can reflect the sincere and simple style of northern Shaanxi folk songs. But from a teaching perspective, the technique of combining real and falsetto should be used more often when singing the songs, it is very difficult to use the real voice completely, and the expressiveness is relatively weakened, so a singing method of combining real and falsetto is adopted (Zhang, 2006).

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Northern Shaanxi folk songs with a wide range of sound that have four-or five-degree intervals and seven- or eight-degree intervals are more common, and folk singers often can't handle such a big leap by using their real voices exclusively. In addition, because northern Shaanxi is located in the depths of the mountains, when singing in the field, to make the voice high and hear far away, it is necessary to resort to falsetto (Dong, 2008).

However, it is permeated by the stanza, the characteristic point of the line, and the stanza rhyme that comes from it, but it contains a lot of changes and has a very strong spirit. The folk songs of northern Shaanxi are generally composed of phrases

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and passages that echo the principle of symmetry, in the structure of these pairs, called the main principle, the musical forms are generally composed of the upper and lower passages. The latter part of the middle part is divided into the whole part, or the first part is reduplicated, which may be modified or may not be modified except for the ending. There is more subtle variation in the musical progression of folk songs.

The number of words in the lyrics of northern Shaanxi folk songs is not specifically stated but the musical passages have the following characteristics: The first verse is the smallest single element in the music composition, and it is a complete composition with a single theme, and a verse is a melody. The words in the second verse stand alone and are closely linked together to provide the common thought of the verse. The third section of the phrase is divided into a phrase by the end, and there is a mutual response between these phrases on the inner side, usually consisting of one or two phrases. However, a special time can also be one or more phrases, even a phrase into a verse. In short, the phrase is the basic unit in northern Shaanxi folk songs, and the phrase expresses a complete tune. For example, "十二月花(December flower)" (*Example 2.9*) is composed of two phrases.

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Example 2.9 "*十二月花*（December flower)"

In the spiral method of northern Shanxi folk song, the most distinctive feature is that the lower fourth of tonic and the upper fourth of tonic highlight the support for the modulate tonic, forming a distinct fourth leap interval. The melody composition of Shaanxi folk songs is mainly characterized by a fourth plus a second or two overlapping fourth degrees (Li, 2014). The continuous leap of double and four degrees makes the folk songs of northern Shaanxi full of infinite life, or up and down, and the geographical environment of northern Shaanxi just blends together. Typical representative works are "*兰花花*（*Lan Hua Hua*)," "*供月光*（*Gong Yue Guang*)," (*Example 2.10*) and "*脚夫调*（*Jiao Fu Diao*)" among others.

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Example 2.10 "*供月光* (*Gong Yue Guang*)"

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2.6 The Difference Between Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs and Other Folk Songs

The emotional expression of northern Shaanxi folk songs is relatively straightforward, and the melody is impressive, which makes people feel turbulent. The expression of the lyrics is also more rural because it contains many dialects of northern Shaanxi, which are more simple and concise in language, but it also does not lose the people of northern Shaanxi's optimistic humor. Other folk songs are usually more implicit and euphemistic in expressing inner emotions. For example, folk songs from southern China are characterized by less melody fluctuation, fewer high notes, and more emphasis on expressing a kind of artistic conception, which is in sharp contrast to the

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direct and clear folk songs of northern Shaanxi.

The melody of northern Shaanxi folk songs has unrestrained music beats and a wide range of sound free extensions of rhythm. The use of "*Gao Qiang*" makes the song sound free and relaxed, with sincere and unrestrained emotions. The use of overtones makes the song sound very rich, reflecting the temperament of northern Chinese people, and their modes also differ. The common modes in northern Shaanxi folk songs are the "*徵* (*Zhi*)" mode and the "*商* (*Shang*)" mode, while other folk songs are most common in the "*宫* (*Gong*)" mode and the "*羽* (*Yu*)" mode. "*宫* (*Gong*)" mode usually ends on "Do" and"*羽* (*Yu*)" mode usually ends on "La". There are also great differences in the range, northern Shaanxi folk songs have a wide range, and people freely express their thoughts and feelings while other folk songs are different, there are rarely intervals exceeding octaves in major leaps (Pu, 2013).

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2.7 Vocal Techniques of Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs

There is a close relationship between the singing point and vocal techniques of Shaanxi folk songs and their geographical culture, it is said that one land supports one person. Vocal techniques in northern Shaanxi folk songs can be roughly divided into four categories.

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2.7.1 Vocal Technique for "*平腔* (*Ping Qiang*)"

In short, "*Ping Qiang*" means singing with a real voice or a combination of real and falsetto, with the real voice being the main part. "*Ping Qiang*" method sounds high-pitched and bright, the melody has ups and downs, and it is bright and smooth (Liu, 2011). Northern Shaanxi folk songs are mainly sung in "*Ping Qiang*" as the main form of singing, and according to the changes in the sound area of the song, one can also adjust the proportion of real and falsetto appropriately.

"*Ping Qiang*" is the way of straight singing, when singing, the singer can try the following preparation method: First, tighten the vocal cords to keep them from shaking or trembling, balance the strength to contrast with the vibration, and then use the breath to make a crescendo to maintain the shape of the mouth and the position of the voice (Liu, 2011).

In the singing of northern Shaanxi folk songs, if the use of "*Ping Qiang*" , the real voice should be the main core support, and some need to combine real and falsetto. In the actual singing process, it is also necessary to understand the actual singing needs and integrate the real voice and the falsetto effectively (Liu, 2022). At present, the singing style of folk songs in northern Shaanxi is mainly "*Ping Qiang*".

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Entirely in real voice singing the northern Shaanxi folk songs in the style of a class, there are two types of songs,slow; melody, relatively less volatile, tactfully, gentle, sad songs such as "*揽工调* (*Lan Gong Diao*)" and many more (Liu, 2022). The next type of song is fast; the range is not wide; the forceful melody line is straight; songs such as "*天心顺* (*Tian Xin Shun*)"; etc. If, in the singing process, when the rhythm beat amplitude is relatively large, the real voice can no longer meet its actual needs, it is necessary to use a falsetto to meet the actual needs of singing. For example, "*Xin Tian You*" is a combination of real and falsetto. Falsetto singing, in northern Shaanxi, people call a person or, in common talk, shout in the person's direction, often behind the long sound with an emphasis on the last word. The many long tones in the northern Shaanxi folk songs with a short grace note are just the embodiment of the language habits, this kind of sound often has a shorter duration and the domain is higher.

2.7.2 Glissando

The glissando vocal technique has always occupied an important position in many singing styles of northern Shaanxi folk songs, this singing style arose because of the frequent downward inflections that are a feature of the northern Shaanxi dialect. The

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basic characteristic of most northern Shaanxi folk songs is the direct freedom of melody. Because of the unique intonation and way of speaking of people in northern Shaanxi, after a long period of development, the intonation gradually changed into glissando (Liu, 2022).

Glissando with the following line in the northern Shaanxi folk songs, which is related to the northern Shaanxi people's tone of voice (Wang, 2002), divided into big glissando (*Example 2.11*) and small glissando (small glissando is a minor third or less, while big glissando is a major third or more). The big glissando singing style reproduces the rich expressive power with an exaggerated singing style to achieve a strong mind-blowing effect.

Glissando also has a more prominent characteristic, that is, it needs to organically combine the dialect with the lyrics and highlight the folk song. Only in this way can the emotion of the song be vividly demonstrated and reflect the unique artistic style characteristics of the song.

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Example 2.11 Big Glissando

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2.7.3 Trill

Most of the northern Shaanxi folk songs are sung in trill, but many small trills distinctions appear in the songs. These small trills softened the savagery of the northern Shaanxi folk songs and rigid song sounds that are vivid and full of passion, such as "*横山里下来些游击队* (*Heng Shan Li Xia Lai Xie You Ji Dui*)" (*Example 2.12*)

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Example 2.12 "*横山里下来些游击队* (*Heng Shan Li Xia Lai Xie You Ji Dui*)"

2.7.4 Staccato

Staccato means to sing short, pause, and is generally an ornamental, colorific phrase while singing; one should pay attention to the extension of its characteristics to sing lively, natural, and full of life (Liu, 2022). There are many ways to sing folk songs in northern Shaanxi, among which staccato vocal technique can better highlight the characteristics of the songs. The main advantage of the staccato is that it is characterized by a short, sonorous, and powerful pronunciation, and each note is actually present. When singing the staccato vocal technique, one should intentionally sing every note truly and clearly and every word as well, some of the staccato should be heavy first and then light, the first word should be heavier, followed by the next word gently popping up, to sing with elasticity (Dong, 2008).

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2.8 Northern Shaanxi Dialect

Cultural heritage often follows two paths: one is words and inventions, and the other is language and customs, however, people have always paid more attention to the former because they are manifested and magnificent, and for the latter, because of their complicated fineness, it is difficult to become systematic, and it is often difficult to grasp (Liu, 2011). However, when we need to appreciate the charm of a culture more deeply, we will find that language is more vivid.

In the northern Shaanxi dialect, Chinese character reduplication appear in large numbers, some of which have lost their original grammatical significance but play a role in the dialect that goes far beyond the connotations of the words themselves, the direct use of "...BB" adjectives in folk songs has an unexpected rhetorical effect (Zhang, 2006). For example, "*酸格溜溜* (*Suan Ge Liu Liu*)," "*蓝格莹莹* (*Lan Ge Ying Ying*)," "*红个丹丹* (*Hong Ge Dan Dan*)" and so on, these words are not only shown in the song, but also in the ordinary communication and speech, for example, "*美得很很* (*Mei De Hen Hen*)" means very good; "*聊得太太*(*Liao De Tai Tai*)" means very suitable.

In the dialect of northern Shaanxi, the use of decorative words is very common,

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and folk songs also inherit this feature. Decorative words are some foil words composed of modal words or appellations interspersed in folk song lyrics, in addition to the positive words that directly express the ideological content of the song (Pang, 2018). Some nasal sounds in the Shaanxi dialect will become nasalized in certain contexts, which is particularly evident in fast speech or oral communication.

2.9 Dialect in Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs

The northern Shaanxi folk song is of great research value because the well-known songs are mainly based on local dialects at present. Dialects not only add strong local color to the lyrics of folk songs but also have a strong influence on the music and become an important factor in determining the style of tunes.

Due to the dialect pronunciation being at the front and sounding similar to a "shout," the resonance is weak, resulting in an original sound based on voice that lacks resonance; the lyrics of northern Shaanxi folk songs are simple and straightforward, directly related to the daily lives of the working people (Yang, 2010).

Compared with Mandarin, the northern Shaanxi dialect has a lot of entering

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words, which are short and powerful, and there are a lot of decorative words, which puts forward a relatively high requirement on the skill of the mouth in vocal training. They use simple and easy to understand local dialect, express their inner feelings, and express their views on people and things. Because of its simple language, it is easy to arouse the resonance of the broad masses of people, and the art of communication also lets people be easy to accept and sing, the widespread use of dialect makes the folk songs of northern Shaanxi have a more unique charm (Dong, 2012).

Some of the northern Shaanxi folk songs have profound background stories, and the songs depict the stories in a narrative way with very deep content. For example, such as "*三十里铺* (*San Shi Li Pu*)," "*兰花花* (*Lan Hua Hua*)" and "*五哥放羊* (*Wu Ge Fang Yang*)" all have specific story lines (Yang, 2010). The use of dialect is a major feature of northern Shaanxi folk songs. The dialect highlights the local style of northern Shaanxi and enhances the local color of the songs. This feature is a distinctive characteristic that distinguishes it from other folk songs.

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2.10 Performance of Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs

Solo songs: solo songs occupy a larger proportion of northern Shaanxi folk songs,

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solo songs are divided into male and female solo songs, songs express the emotions of people's hearts, such as joy, sadness, sorrow, and anger. The singer in the performance is usually in a singing role in line with the clothing: the common dress with short-sleeved wool shirt, blue scarf or white shirt, red or light cloth waist, with typical characteristics of northern Shaanxi clothing, giving a person a simple image of northern Shaanxi. On the other hand, women's costumes are very different from men's, women's costumes are mainly in dark colors, such as red, purple, blue, green, etc., and the style of costumes is mainly those from Chinese folk songs before the reform and opening up (1912-1978). Stage images are also common in the style of this period, with typical features such as braids, cloth shoes, flat bangs, and a lot more. 王向荣 (*Wang Xiangrong*) is an important representative of northern Shaanxi folk song singers, his performance is simple and wonderful, his vocal technique is high, and he has a deep study of northern Shaanxi folk songs (Lv, 2007). (A link to his performance can be found here) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgnLpHcwD7s 王向荣-天下黄河九十九道湾 (*Tian Xia Huang He Jiu Shi Jiu Dao Wan*)

Singing for two or more people: Yangko and the rain tune are representative; northern Shaanxi Yangko is a common form of performance in festivals, and the main characteristic is that there must be a lead singer. The performance of the umbrella head is usually the lead, walking in the head of the Yangko team while doing the Yangko, and the rest of the people are closely behind the umbrella head, walking

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while twisting. Yangko is also an important part of northern Shaanxi culture, to perform Yangko, one usually needs to be accompanied by drums or sing with percussion, percussion is usually small in size and easy to carry, such as bells.

As a phenomenon that has existed in China since ancient times, drought has exerted an influence on people's lives for generations, therefore, various ways and tunes of praying for rain have appeared (Xie, 2022). Northern Shaanxi is located in the northwest region of China, the climate of this region is characterized by scarce rain. Farmers often face the test of drought when they finish planting crops, rain in the sky has become most expected. Because of the impact of drought on survival, they have to pray to God for precipitation and gradually form a tune, it is a song that expresses people's desire for rain and water and asks God to drop rain (*Picture 2.3*), the melody of praying for rain was produced under this background (Xie, 2022).



Picture 2.3 Perform of Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs

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2.11 Previous Research Related

Among the singers singing the folk songs of northern Shaanxi, there are key figures 王向荣 (*Wang Xiangrong*), 王二妮 (*Wang Erni*), 杜朋朋 (*Du Pengpeng*), 朝朝 (*Chao Chao*) and so on. 王向荣 (*Wang Xiangrong*) is a folk singer and an insightful folk musician, he studied folk songs for more than 40 years, he understood various styles of the folk songs and personally visited representative figures of various schools. Besides, he had a certain understanding of the history of northern Shaanxi folk songs and experience of performing all over the country and absorbing folk songs from all over the country. 王向荣 (*Wang Xiangrong*) said: "Northern Shaanxi people and their folk songs can only be simple and natural, in my opinion, whatever is natural is scientific; If you feel right, you will find the right way. Sing comfortably, others listen comfortably, therefore, I sing the northern Shaanxi folk song never reservedly, it is a specific geographical landform of the formation of a specific local music, the songs are strong breath of the Yellow River, this is the taste of northern Shaanxi folk song. When you sing folk songs, you should not think of yourself as a singer but as a farmer, a member of the common people" (Lv, 2007).

For this study, the research had been done mainly in these aspects: Substantial literature reading and consulting for the study of northern Shaanxi folk songs; Second, combined with the experience accumulated in previous teaching through field

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investigation and learning, researchers have further concepts and research ideas for the study of northern Shaanxi folk songs. Through research and performance practice of northern Shaanxi folk song singing in the past years, research has found some vocal techniques and a performance summary of northern Shaanxi folk songs.

On the other hand, in order to do a good job in this research, a large amount of literature has been read, consulted and organized, and the basic theory and concept of this research have been a preliminary prototype. Through practice-led research, the study have collected valuable first-hand data, such as singing recordings, explanation materials of local art, etc. From the study of these materials and combined with their own singing experience for many years and repeated practice, the art of singing folk songs in northern Shaanxi has led to good singing skills and performances with more confidence.

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2.12 Summary

To sum up, this study has a particular understanding of the basic situation of Chinese folk songs after consulting many literature materials. Folk songs in different regions of China are different, and in the final analysis, they are jointly decided by various

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factors such as geography, culture, and customs of different regions. For northern Shaanxi folk songs, it is because of their unique geographical, cultural, humanistic, and more factors, which have created the unique charm.

Sort out the literature on the study of northern Shaanxi folk songs, there are specific research results on the singing techniques, performances, vocal teaching, music characteristics, singing language, and other aspects of northern Shaanxi folk songs, but there is little or no involvement in the "*Gao Qiang*" which brings a new research entry point and an innovation point for this study. A comparative study of the representative diction of northern Shaanxi dialects and the diction of synonyms in Mandarin will also be a new attempt, which is of great significance to the research and development of northern Shaanxi folk songs and is based on this, the study of northern Shaanxi folk songs will be more valuable.

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CHAPTER 3

CREATIVE PROCESS

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3.1 Research Methods

Research, as a careful and exhaustive investigation of a phenomenon aimed at advancing knowledge, is guided by previously collected information, with man's knowledge growing through studying what is already known and revising past knowledge in light of new findings (Ahuja, R, 2011). According to the definition and summary of previous research methods, combined with the practical situation, this study will use the literature review research method and practice-led research method to conduct research from both theoretical and practical aspects.

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3.1.1 Literature Research Method

Literature review, the most basic research method for paper writing, involves searching relevant literature to comprehensively grasp and collect research results, including published papers, journals, and monographs, and entails reading, analyzing, and sorting literature to identify the essential attributes of materials. Its significant difference from other method is that it does not directly deal with the object under study but indirectly accesses information from a variety of literature, which is generally referred to as the " non-contact indirect method" (Lin, 2009). For this study, by referring to the relevant monographs, journals, papers, and conferences on Chinese national vocal and northern Shaanxi folk songs, the gap in the research on northern Shaanxi folk songs is reduced. On this basis, the collective academic knowledge of northern Shaanxi folk songs is further deepened.

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3.1.2 Practice-led Research Method

In 2006, Linda (Candy) defined the term practice-led first, with the purpose of distinguishing the meaning of practice-based and practice-led research, she thinks practice-led research is about practice leading to research insights. Practice-led research focuses on the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge with operational

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implications for practice (Candy, 2006). In the same year, Haseman conceptualized the new research paradigm generated by practice-led research as performative research. In performative research, practice is the principal research activity.

> Practice-led researchers construct experiential starting points from which practice follows. They tend to 'dive in', to commence practising to see what emerges. They acknowledge that what emerges is individualistic and idiosyncratic. This is not to say that these researchers work without larger agendas or emancipatory aspirations, but they eschew the constraints of narrow problem-setting and rigid methodological requirements at the outset of a project (Haseman, 2006, p. 100).

> In using the term practice-led research, we as editors are referring both to the work of art as a form of research and to the creation of the work as generating research insights which might then be documented, theory and generation, though individual contributors may use this and related terms rather differently. Practice-led research, that scholarly research can lead to creative work (Smith et al., 2009, p. 7).

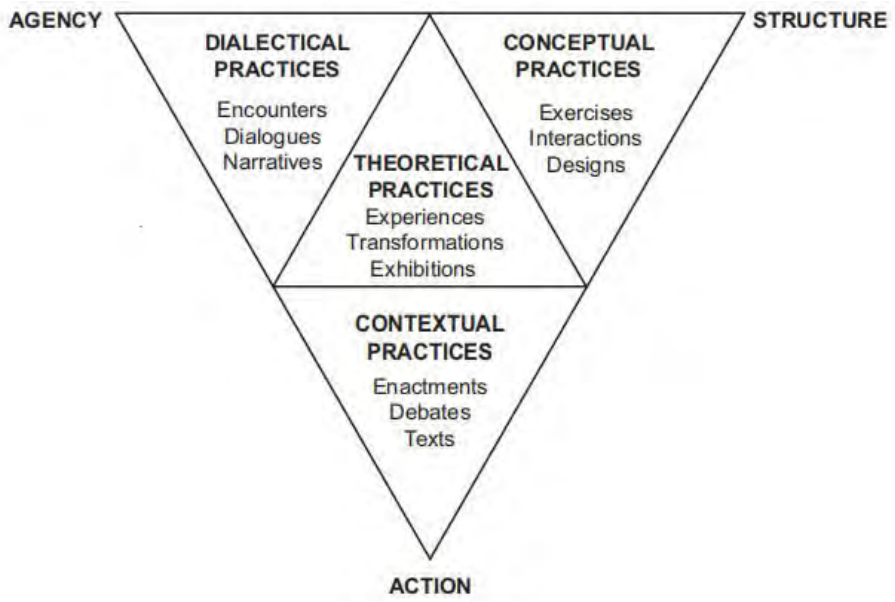
In 2009, Smith made some innovations in practice-led learning based on the work of the previous two people, this research method focuses on expanding knowledge in practice and continuing practice in knowledge. This type of research includes practice as an integral part of its methodology and usually falls within the general field of action research (Candy, 2006). Thus, practical-led research method is a suitable for music performance major, this study can take practice and performance as an experimental process and work on gradually improving the research topic.

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Figure 3.1

Practice-led Research: the framework of practices (Smith et al., 2009, p. 7).



The researcher engaged in reflective practice by documenting vocal exercises and performance trials, using a cyclical model of practice-led inquiry as described by Smith (2009). The theoretical framework of the practice-led research method demonstrates the specific research content and process, and it is very clear that practice is at the absolute core. To realize the cycle of three steps from Agency → Structure → Action, it is necessary to rely on practice, that is, practice-led. According to this theoretical framework, this study is designed with three cycles of thesis → recital → practice. Among the four components involved in completing these links, dialectical practice in this study refers to the repeated practice, reflection, documentation, and synthesis of vocal techniques and dialects. Conceptual practice pertains to the design elements of the concert, including music selection, performance, stage design, and more. Theoretical practice serves as the core of these four components, providing the foundational direction

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to guide the completion of the overall practice. These theories include literature review, theoretical part of research methods, basic theories of singing techniques and performance, which is a fusion of multiple theories, not a single theory. Contextual practice is to achieve research goals through practice and writing collaboration.

> The central strand that binds the four interconnected areas of practice is inherently *theoretical* and is the site where research problems and issues are found and explored – this is the 'making space' of the studio experience which is central to theorizing practice as research (Sullivan, 2005). Practice-led researchers subsequently move eclectically across boundaries in their imaginative and intellectual pursuits. When seen in relation to the surrounding areas, different perspectives and practices may emerge as inquiry twists and turns towards various sources in the exploration of forms, purposes and actions. As such, the border areas labelled conceptual, dialectical and contextual practices encompass those features that are part of research activity.

Conceptual practices are at the core of the thinking and making traditions whereby artists give form to thoughts in creating artifacts that become part of the research process (Smith & Hazel, 2009, p. 50).

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> Dialectical practices are forms of inquiry whereby the artist-researcher explores the uniquely human process of making meaning through experiences that are felt, lived, reconstructed and reinterpreted. These may be personal or public and may result from experiences of art-making processes or outcomes of encounters with artworks. Consequently meanings are 'made' from the transactions and narratives that emerge and these have the power and agency to change on an individual or community level. Here the artist-researcher utilizes the cognitive capacity of the arts as socially mediated processes and the process of 'thinking in a language' whereby images and objects are texts that carry forms of cultural coding that require analysis and dialogue to create and communicate meaning.

Contextual practices, on the other hand, reflect the long tradition of the arts as critical forms of inquiry whose purpose is to bring about social change. Contextual art practices make use of cognitive processes that are best described as 'thinking in a setting'

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that is situational and makes use of visual texts, issues, debates, and desires that are local in focus but global in reach (Smith & Hazel, 2009, p. 50).

The above theoretical framework of practice-led research methods is very suitable for this study, and theoretical practice is also at the core. The theory mainly refers to the induction and summary of vocal techniques and performance exercises in northern Shaanxi folk songs. Through literature research and discussions with the supervisor, the basic framework concept of vocal music technology is obtained, and a practical research plan is formulated through practice-oriented exercises. During the process of developing the practical plan, the theory is continuously improved and transformed into practice, forming a mutual relationship where theory serves as the basis for practice, and practice contributes to the development of theory.

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For this study, contextual practices are presented in the form of recitals. In recital practice, achieving success requires the researcher to have a clear idea of practice, with the concept of performance being the core element for smooth execution. The theme of this study is northern Shaanxi folk songs, recitals presented in the form of vocal performance are most consistent with the actual situation. The researcher needs to have scientific planning and reasonable practice for the whole recital performance concept, and have different performance design and singing research for different songs, so as to present the effect of different interpretations of different songs on the stage, thus avoiding a single, boring performance. For example, the sequence design of the recital repertoires

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in this study should be scientifically designed based on the singer's own vocal technique and the characteristics of the songs. The concept of a good practical performance should be innovative and somewhat different from traditional recitals.

Dialectical practices and contextual practices are two important links in practice-led research methods, they are closely related and different from each other, they put forward higher requirements for performers. Taking this study as an example, in simple terms, performers must have good vocal ability and performance ability. The concept of music performance, which posits that it is a process of remolding and secondary creation, suggests that through each practical performance, the performer experiences different feelings, thereby turning situational practice into a live performance (Gao, 2017). Performers design multiple performance methods and procedures based on their own experience and the emotions that the musical work aims to convey. They can also anticipate the potential impact of each performance approach. Through repeated practice and reflection, performers gain new insights, which in turn enhance the quality of their performance. A specific module of work might be designed and run as suggested to look at a range of examples and to introduce methods of critical analysis informed by explicit ideas (know-that) (Nelson, 2013).

Different performance environments, performance purposes, and the performer's own situation will directly affect the performance effect, therefore, contextual practices put forward higher requirements for performers.

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In summary, the basic conceptual framework of the practice-led research methodology used in this study is to start with a basic theory of practice, to conduct practice under the guidance of the theory, and to summarize a series of specific issues in the practice process. The content of the thesis can be understood from the recital, at the same time, the thesis allows the observation of the process of the performer's performance and the results that they want to present.

3.2 Creative Process

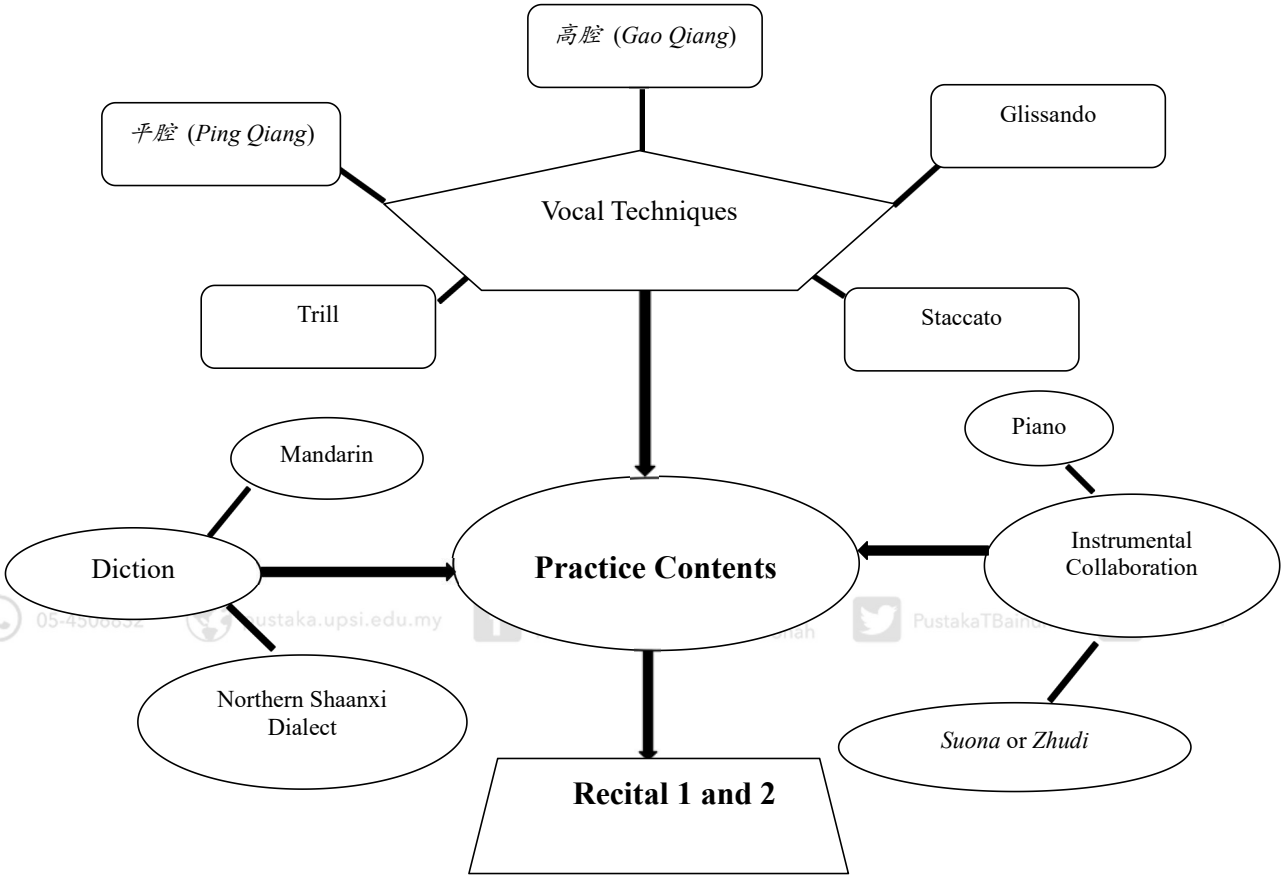
Working from purposeful yet open-ended, clear-sighted yet exploratory, practice-led research makes good use of this creative and critical process and may provide novel perspectives in reviewing existing knowledge structures (Smith & Hazel, 2009, p. 49). It is advantage of using practice-led research methods is that performers can boldly innovate with an open mind based on the experience gained in practice. This not only gives researchers more room for practice, but also encourages them to express their ideas. Thus individual or collaborative critical reflection on experience, in the form perhaps of a documented conversation, may, through gesturing towards a more abstract conceptualization, assist in disseminating the (initially embodied)mode of knowing (Nelson. P. 2013, p.57). This figure is a research procedure based on the theoretical framework of practice-led research.

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Figure 3.2

Creative process steps



This study aims to find out the vocal core parts of northern Shaanxi folk songs such as "*Gao Qiang*" through practice and sum up the singing experience and methods. Contextual art practices make use of cognitive processes that are best described as 'thinking in a setting' (Smith & Hazel, 2009, p. 50). The integration of the northern Shaanxi folk song dialect and Mandarin is a further consideration based on core elements vocal techniques, and this study aims to find out the contribution of creating those

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elements as part of the research process. At the same time, the process of instrumental collaboration is also very important for this study, during the practice with the instrumental collaboration, performers constantly discussed how to express the song, such as the strength, speed, even the mood of the instrumental collaboration, etc, these are all factors that determine the success of this study. Recital is the main expression of the final research results of this study, which are best explanation as ‘thinking in a setting’.

The vocal technique of northern Shaanxi folk song is summarized through research methods such as literature research and practical research. Among these vocal techniques, there have been some research results on the "*Ping Qiang*", glissando, trill, and staccato, but the "*Gao Qiang*" is still a research gap, so the "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique is a key element in the research of the vocal technique. After discussing with local singers, the contents of this key research were determined. In the selection of northern Shaanxi folk songs, the songs with "*Gao Qiang*" vocal techniques accounted for about half of the full recital songs, which were determined after thorough research and analysis and an intense selection process.

The research process for the "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique involves the collection and analysis of northern Shaanxi folk songs through audio, video, and on-site observation, recording and discussing the key vocal techniques of "*Gao Qiang*". After in-depth discussions with the instructors and the results obtained from these discussions, the

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technical points of "*Gao Qiang*" were finally sorted out, leading to the realization of the theoretical model of the "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique and enabling the key practical exercise of this research to be carried out.

This study is about vocal technique and performance practice, only when the researcher masters this performance can be more convincing of research result. Therefore, it is only after long-term practice that many discussions on vocal techniques with local singers and instructor could yield useful information. The local singers gave this study a lot of guidance on pronunciation techniques and singing trips, especially on the issue of converting real and falsetto, offering this research a new breakthrough. The instructor gave a lot of help on the technical level of vocal, such as breath support when singing "*Gao Qiang*", timbre control, etc, under the guiding suggestions, which enabled this research to proceed smoothly.

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In order to better demonstrate the research results, each of the "*Gao Qiang*" songs in the recital selected has a different characteristic. Among the other aspects of the vocal technique, basically the summary is mainly inductive, because they are relatively less difficult to sing, especially the trills and glissando, which are only stylistic features and closely related to the local dialect. But for some people who are not very good at vocal technique, it is still a difficult point of singing, and therefore creates a situation where one requires a certain amount of introduction to this part of the content. Each vocal technique will be combined with selected songs and demonstrated in recital, and this part of the

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vocal technique will be written about in detail in Chapter 4 and will not be covered in detail here.

Vocal technique is the key to the conduct of this study, and with the results of the first step, the next step in the study can be carried out, which is the northern Shaanxi dialect. Due to the popularity of Mandarin, the unique pronunciation characteristics of the northern Shaanxi dialect in the selected songs will be compared with the Mandarin so as to greatly reduce the difficulty of learning the northern Shaanxi dialect, therefore, it is proposed to be presented in the form of a table. After discussions with the instructor, the researcher believes that this method is clear and can basically describe the pronunciation characteristics of the northern Shaanxi dialect clearly, allowing readers to understand the meaning of the thesis.

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Another element of practical research in this study is practicing and working with instrumental collaboration, the success of the recital is the result of the concerted efforts of all the performers. The performers in this study include singers, piano accompanists, *Suo Na* and *Zhu Di* players, they need to study the sequence of performances, the stage positions, the cooperation between the performers and other core issues during the recital. This process can be achieved after multiple training sessions under the guidance of instructor and discussions with performers. After the above steps, the research results will finally be presented in two forms: thesis and recital.

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3.3 Features of the Recital

Recital is one of the main forms of presentation of the research results, two solo recitals are planned, and the content presented in the two recitals will be very different. The first recital will take northern Shaanxi folk songs, as the singing object, so the first recital will be all songs of the research topic, including a variety of styles and forms of folk songs. In order to better display the artistic charm of Shaanxi folk songs and have more space to play, the accompaniment in the recital will mainly be piano accompaniment, and some individual songs will be accompanied by Chinese musical instruments or musical instruments and piano together. The specific form is subject to the actual rehearsal situation of the recital and the guidance and suggestions of the instructor. The second recital further performs folk songs from northern Shaanxi, this session will showcase as many styles of songs as possible through the demonstration of vocal techniques. It will give peers and learners the opportunity to communicate intuitively, which is conducive to vocal progress. The form of accompaniment is not limited to the piano, and will be accompanied by other musical instruments, the actual situation depends on the specific situation of the piece. This study will use like the *SuoNa* and China *ZhuDi*, that are often heard in folk songs. *SuoNa* is a wind instrument with strong penetrating force, wide popularity, and rich skills. It is widely used in folk ceremonies such as marriage, funerals, weddings, ceremonies, and sacrifices.

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Picture 3.1 SuoNa

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ZhuDi (Chinese flute) is the oldest Han musical instrument found so far, and it is also the most representative of the Han musical instruments. *ZhuDi* has formed its own characteristics in its long historical and cultural background and has become an integral part of Chinese culture.



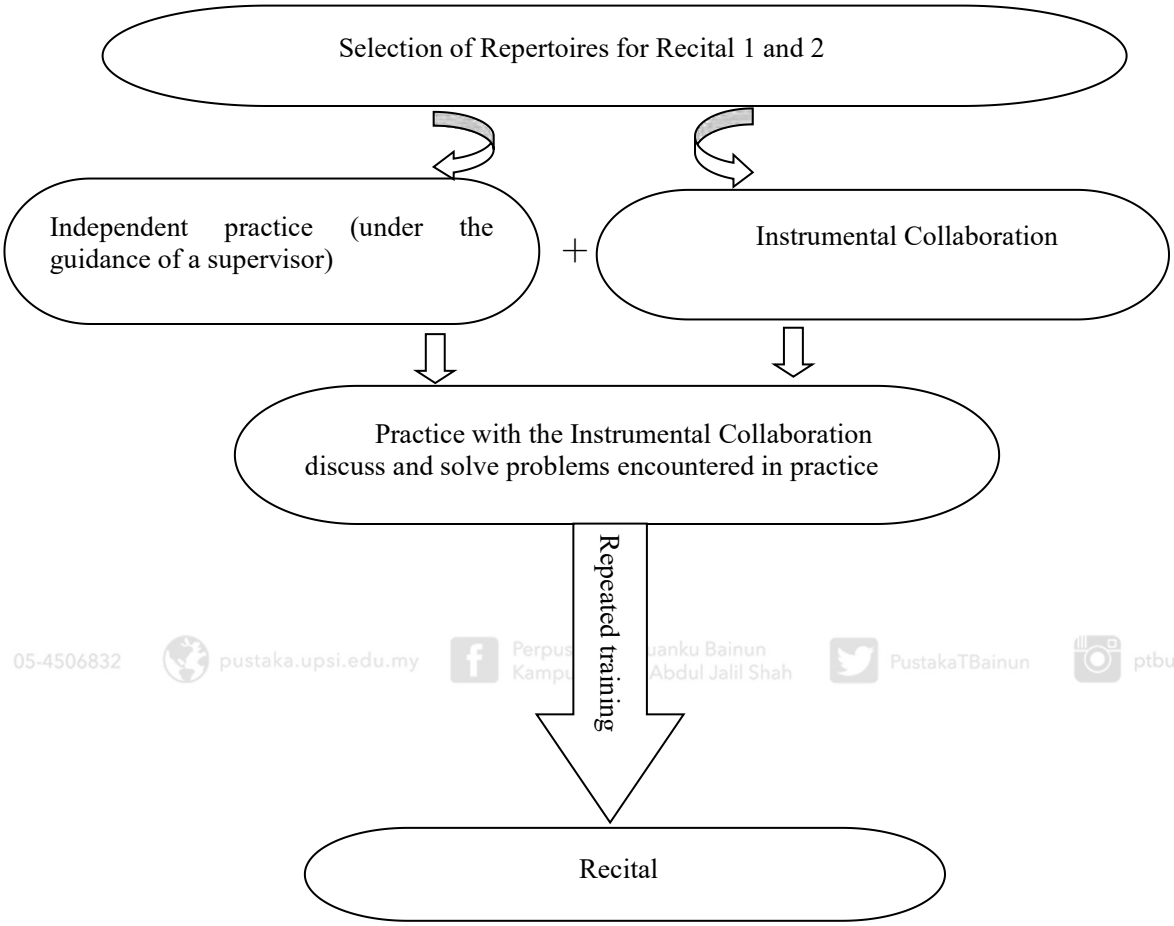
Picture 3.2 China *ZhuDi*

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Figure 3.3

Recital Process



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CHAPTER 4

CONCEPT OF PERFORMANCE

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4.1 Introduction

The researcher, by investigating the theory of music performance combined with the actual situation to carry out research, thus derives the basic concept of performance in this study. To perform accurately, this chapter aims to identify and practice northern Shaanxi songs' correct vocal techniques and diction. Through focusing on delving into the summary of the vocal techniques of northern Shaanxi folk songs, ranging from "*高腔* (*Gao Qiang*)" and "*平腔* (*Ping Qiang*)," glissando, trill, and staccato, among them, the "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique is the main research object. In the study of the northern

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Shaanxi dialect, to more directly present the diction characteristics, taking the selected songs as an example, the typical characteristics of the dialect were summarized and compared with those of Mandarin in tables.

4.2 Conceptual Framework of Performance

There are a variety of songs rich in emotion in northern Shaanxi folk songs, each with corresponding methods for their respective performances; the concept of performance is particularly important in terms of how these songs can be performed well. The essence of music performance is a part of the process of music practice; it provides a rich domain for the study of both cognitive and practice skills. Performers dominate many aspects of our musical culture today, such as concert attendance and record sales, which frequently reflect listeners' preferences for performers and the ability to distinguish among performances (Palmer, 1997). It is precisely with music performance that composers have greater significance for creating music works, and audiences can obtain music experience through music performers, arousing emotional resonance with composers (Gao, 2018). Music performance aims to achieve unified emotional resonance among composers, music performers, and audiences.

> Music performance is a deeply human activity that requires emotional, cognitive, and artistic aptitudes. At the same time, it is also a complex task involving physical, acoustic, physiological, psychological, social, and artistic aspects. Several factors determine the rendition of a musical piece. One of the most obvious is the physical condition of the performer. Not in vain; the performer’s

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mood, health, and fatigue play a crucial role in playing an instrument (Delgado, M. et al, 2011).

In Poli's (2004) opinion, when a human performs music, the performer organizes acoustical or perceptual changes in sound to convey musical content to the audience; by adding changeable expressive intentions, the same piece of music can be performed to express a particular interpretation of the score. However, there is also a different view; that is, Sloboda (2000) said technical proficiency and expressiveness are the two main components of skilled music performance, despite their interactions and dependence on one another, but they are distinct elements. To address this issue, Sloboda suggests that understanding a work's or a genre's underlying structural and stylistic limitations is necessary for expressive skill. According to another viewpoint, one of the first types of musical structures for which systematic patterns of performance expression were documented was through the duration patterns that form characteristic rhythms (Bengtsson & Gabrielsson, 1977). However, in Gao's theory, music performance is a human activity, a reproduction of musical works, and a secondary creation of music. It is a presentation in nature that is not repeatable and cannot modify the artistic behavior; the performance form is live (Gao, 2017), this kind of performance means that there must be a suitable venue. Similar to Gao's views of live performance, Baxter-Moore (2016) thought, an individual who states that aspects of live performances have always been with us but have not been as prevalent as they are now because audiences are exposed to too much-recorded music rather than performing it live.

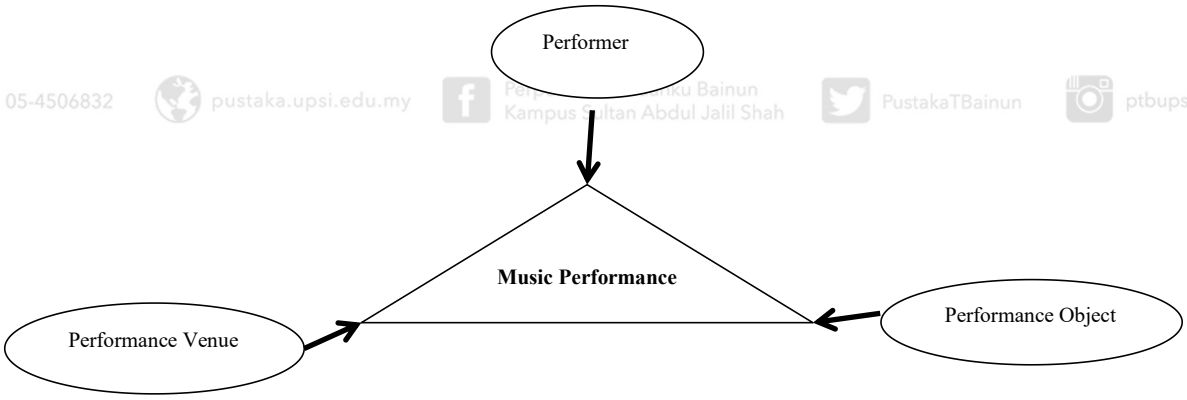
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From these points above and in conjunction with the theme of this study, music performance needs to meet the following conditions: performance venue, performance object, and performer. The performance process should be complete and coherent, even if there are certain defects in the performance process, the mentality should adjust to complete the following performance. Furthermore, it refers to the case of live performance, which ultimately is the prime objective of this research.

Figure 4.1

Conditions for Music Performance



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4.2.1 Performance Venue

Music performances require a particular venue, whether large or small, a concert hall, a square, or a small stage. The venue should be chosen according to the needs of the performance, and the right venue can make a better experience for both the performer and the audience.

> The role of the concert venue was important in providing good acoustics, sight lines, and physical comfort. The relatively small size of Cadogan Hall facilitated a valued sense of 'intimacy' through audience members' proximity to the performers, and for some, promoting a feeling of shared experience with other audience members (Ọláníyan, M, 2008 p. 27).

The equipment and stage layout of the venue should be designed according to the actual performance situation. However, the combination of less common pieces with those regularly heard in live performances was especially well-liked by the respondents, as was the venue's comfort and the audience's laid-back yet attentive demeanor.

In this study, the recital will be held in the recital hall; the setting of the performance venue will be an empty stage with singers, the piano, and accompanists during the performance. Amplification equipment is required and must not be turned on during singing. The equipment needs to be turned on, light music played during the home's speech and intermission modifications, and multimedia equipment needs to play.

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Choosing the appropriate size is an important factor; a stage that is too small will restrict the kinds of shows that can be presented, the actors' comfort level, and the ease with which acts can be switched between. On the other hand, a stage that is too big will make it harder for performers to interact intimately with the audience and one another. Instead of being separated by something, the stage will be entirely open for the audience; both performers and audiences can be closer to each other because of the sound and atmosphere benefits of an open stage; it is also a good way to help the performer express emotion to the audience, the scenery, and lighting do not need to be hidden.

4.2.2 Performance Object

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The object refers to a musical work, and the object of music performance should be an artistic conception that embraces different performance methods and should be used according to different performance objects (Gao, 2018, p. 15). Musical structures and units are produced during a performance by retrieving them from memory under the performer's conceptual interpretation, getting ready for production, and transforming them into the appropriate movements. Most studies focus on the performance of musical compositions for which notation is available, thus providing unambiguous performance goals (Palmer, 1997). The object of this study is to analyze specific northern Shaanxi folk songs in detail, with the focus of research being on correct vocal techniques and key points of the northern Shaanxi dialect diction.

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4.2.3 Performer

The performer is the core link in the music performance condition and is a vivid and emotional individual or group. Performers aim to reach a higher level of excellence while fully delivering the content of their performances. This pursuit involves refining their skills, enhancing their expressiveness, and deeply engaging with their material. Meanwhile, they should be able to familiarize themselves with the stage and make appropriate adjustments. In the form of a music performance with vocals, the performers are composed of singers and accompanists to complete the performance together, and the singers should have their interpretation of the performance object to form their performance style. This study presents the musical performances as recitals, which are vocal performances. Vocal performance art is an all-encompassing art style that incorporates expression, physicality, cognition, and creativity, and like other art forms, it is primarily a performance based on aesthetic ideals and sense, resulting in numerous music performance standards that can be used to evaluate and measure vocal performance (Chen, 2016).

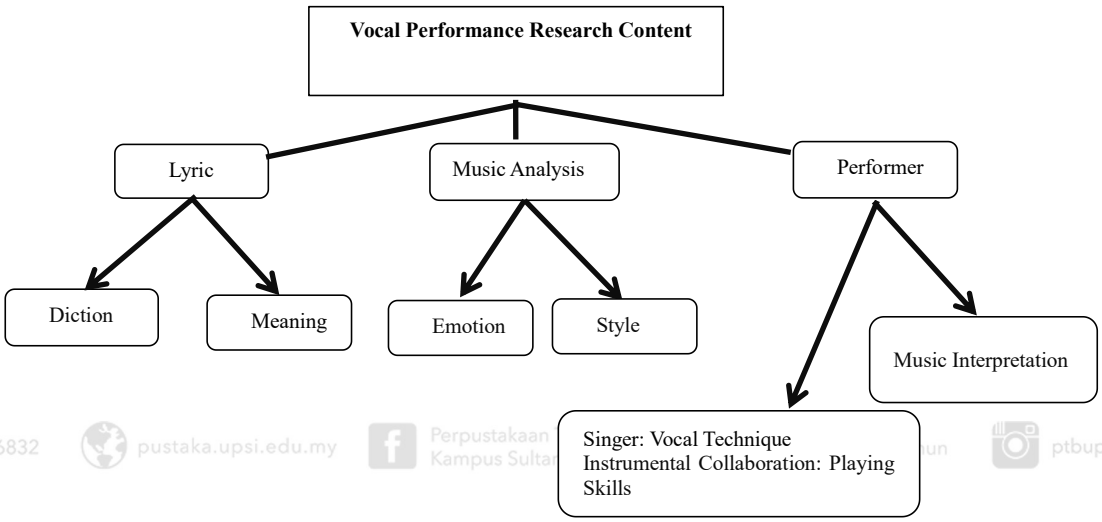
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4.3 Vocal Performance Research Content

Figure 4.2

Vocal Performance Research Content



The research above contains content formulated based on the theoretical framework of music performance and combined with the actual situation of this study, it consists of three parts: music analysis, lyrics, and performers. The music analysis section details the specifics of the melody, rhythmic characteristics, interpretation, and different songs that need to be presented in different ways. The performer is an indispensable component of music performance; for vocal performances, it is necessary to master specific vocal techniques to perform well; therefore, this aspect will be studied in detail. Lyrics aim to expresses its feelings, and then the correct diction can accurately express the song, the study also focuses on the dialect diction and emotional interpretation of selected songs.

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4.3.1 Lyrics

In Hiller's view, a singer who cannot understand his lyrics cannot sing them. Thus, it is recommended that singers read lyrics aloud before beginning to sing them, going so far as to ensure they understand everything a skilled orator would notice. The fine points of expression required by the effect cannot be fully captured in musical notation; this shortcoming must be compensated for by the art of declamation (Hiller, 2001, p. 66). The audience needs to understand the lyrics, which connect the performers and the audience. The lyrics research for this study has two aspects; one is the connection between lyrics and music, which will be presented in Chapter 5 of the performance description. The other is comparing the differences in pronunciation between the northern Shaanxi dialect and Mandarin in terms of their typical characteristics.

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Lyrics are the main form in which the performer conveys the song to the audience, and they are the primary method by which the audience can feel the content of the performer's performance, therefore, lyrics are the key to the success of a musical work. Not only do lyricists need to write good lyrics, but performers also need to understand the meaning of the lyrics, sing with accurate diction and appropriate tone, and perform differently according to different phrases in the lyrics to accurately express the content of the song to the audience.

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4.3.2 Music Analysis

The study of music analysis provides several justifications for the ideas contained in a particular composition. A composition, for example, can be understood as a hierarchy of part-to-whole relationships, a linear path that traces the harmonic tension, or a range of emotions that come together to form a cohesive character (Sundin 1984).

> The prevailing mood of the music is either tragic, melancholy, nostalgic, or sweetly sad, or else, in dance tunes, characterized by frenetic gaiety and a rather aggressive release of energy. Control and individualism are the key descriptive terms here (Lomax, A. 1959, p.936).

From the views of the two people above, we conclude that music analysis is very important for music performance, it is not only to analyze the contents of the music score but also to do a case-by-case analysis, different music has different analyses, and the meaning behind the music is analyzed. For music performance, music analysis can find the correct way of performing and analyzing performance emotion, suggesting that music analysis is an important condition for music performance.

When analyzing works, it is worth paying attention to some key music fragments or notes that can express the style characteristics of songs, such as the "*Gao Qiang*," glissando, trill, and staccato in this study. In addition to musical knowledge of the scores, the characteristics of the music and the emotions that the music wants to express should be analyzed in detail; only in this case can one master the music when performing works.

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4.3.3 Performer as Singer

The performer is at the core of the music performance and has two major characteristics: they must know how to interpret and how different interpretations are different. Moreover, the performer is also a co-creator and must have theoretical and analytical skills. If the performer cannot analyze well, many problems will occur, an interpretation that differs significantly from the original meaning (Narmour, 1988). The success of a performer is directly related to the audience, the performer should understand the audience's characteristics and favorite style and respect and love the audience. On this point, this study agrees with Daniel's point of view:

> I would suggest that love is the key to the proper relationship between the performer and the audience. One of the most significant occupational dangers for the performer is the amount of isolation involved in honing one's craft. Any singer or instrumentalist requires a certain amount of pseudo-monastic discipline to develop a thorough command of one's technique and a thorough understanding of the composition at hand. It has been the experience of many performers, including myself, that a special effort is required to break through these constantly-reinforced patterns of behavior to present one's work as a gift to the listener (Daniel, 1991).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the performer should know what kind of performance moves the audience; simultaneously, a co-creator should have two abilities: remolding and re-creation. Despite this, performers should have certain psychological control skills, especially when performing on the spot, to have no distracting thoughts, accumulate more stage experience in peacetime, practice music works repeatedly, and accept that there will be imperfect performances (Gao, 2018, p. 29).

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4.3.3.1 Remolding

Each performer intends to convey the communicative content in musical performance, including the performers' conceptual interpretation of the musical composition (Palmer, 1997, p. 119). The performer studies and analyzes the music score, understands the detailed overview of the work, and follows the music score instructions and the composer's intentions (Gao, 2018). In music performance, remolding refers to the reproduction of a musical work, where the musical work is the original piece, not one that has been modified. For example, in early music performances, antique instruments were imitated, and performances were performed according to the original music scores and when the works were produced. From this point of view, the performer must have a certain understanding of the history of the work and some research on the performances at that time.

The view of remolding in music performance originated during the Renaissance, and many theorists have referred to it as "authentic" musical performance due to its essence of performing the work as it is. The idea of "remodeling" ethnomusicology is based on the view of an intellectual field where consensus should reign and where people generally agree on a single model (Seeger, A. 1987). However, scholars have also questioned this "authenticity" of musical performance, Joseph Kerman (1985) believes that performance is a form of criticism, denying the statement of "authenticity". Another scholar, Kivy Peter (1995), agrees with this point of view and enriches the content of

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"authentic" performances on this basis. He suggested that these performances are, first and foremost, faithful to the composer and the era in which he lived, preserving the composer's work's originality and supporting the performer in performing in a way that is original yet not imitative. Every composer has the limitations of his time, and therefore, his works are constrained by many factors, such as technical aspects, the social environment, and mainstream values. Therefore, the performer performs the piece in such a way as to recreate the situation as much as possible, but the performer cannot recreate it fully.

This is similar to Zhou's view, which explains that the nature of music dictates that most music cannot be explicitly visual and conceptual. Most people cannot understand music and cannot tell what music expresses; pursuing the ideological philosophy of visualizing music performance is inconsistent with the laws of music aesthetics. The fundamental concept of music aesthetics is auditory feeling and spiritual experience rather than the purpose of obtaining visual images and conceptual thoughts. However, we are not at all opposed to intervening in the music with personal experience, visual associations, and conceptual understanding, nor are we opposed to attempting to understand the composer's original intentions through multiple channels (Zhou, 2007).

The researcher agrees with Kivy Peter's theory about the remolding of music performance; the performer should perform the content of the work itself; in the case of vocal singing, the singer should do the content of the score; the style has been the

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emotion of the song and other aspects of the song through the singing and the stage performance, to give the audience the original flavor of the work.

From the views above, remolding is a detailed interpretation of the musical work, especially the meaning of the score and the musical style of the song, which should be interpreted correctly. It is important to maintain a rigorous attitude, both out of respect for the musical work and as a necessary preparation to be able to perform the work better. The performer must remold musical pieces because the only foundation for sound reproduction is the documentation the composer left behind. By understanding first-hand information about the composer's aesthetic beliefs and the intention of creating musical works, such as diaries, writing notes, letters, and composer biographies, the performer can perform musical works related to the historical context of that era. Through deciphering and interpreting the musical compositions' meaning, performers can thoroughly understand the composer's life and ideas.

For this study, the remolding of northern Shaanxi folk songs is manifested in two ways: firstly, folk songs have been passed down orally and do not have access to the relevant composers, therefore, it is challenging to perform the original characteristics of folk songs. We can only restore the original charm of folk songs as much as possible by understanding the environment, history, and other aspects of the era in which they were produced. Secondly, some folk songs are collected and organized by composers and then rearranged, but the typical characteristics of folk songs are retained. When singing these

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songs, it is necessary to understand the composer's original intention in adapting them. In short, remolding is an important part of a performer's overall ability.

4.3.3.2 Re-creation

In 1961, Meyer was the first person to introduce the idea that the performer is a creator who uses his or her experiences, emotional sensitivity, and inventiveness to harness the repertoire. The composer's proposal can be altered by the performer, sometimes restricted to a fixed melodic meaning; occasionally, the performer varies more, and rich connotations can be explored in music. In Palmer's opinion, the ambiguities in musical notation give a performer a great deal of latitude in determining how to understand the meaning of the piece (Palmer, 1997, p. 119); Palmer has the same idea as Meyer. His subsequent research revealed that the expressive timing patterns vary in the same piece performed by the same singer in different interpretations, the change of patterns increases during the practice of an unfamiliar piece, and the singer transforms from novice to expert.

However, in another view, Sue-Chan and Hempel (2016) thought that expression is the most intensively studied aspect of performance and one closely related to considering the re-creator. The individualistic modeling of a piece by performers following their own concepts or musical intentions is called interpretation. There are

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various interpretations of why different performers may execute the same musical score in different ways or why a performer may execute a piece differently on different occasions. The main reason is that the expressions are different, which can be understood as the re-creation of music.

In addition to the above, Gao (2018) has other views on re-creation; that is, all performing arts need to move people with emotion and affect them; in music performances, emotion is the evocative element that brings purpose to the art. The artistic soul is injected into the performance, and rational participation can better control the emotional scale so that the emotions do not overflow and affect the normal performance.

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Huang Xi (2018) did an excellent job of utilizing re-creation extensively for her doctoral dissertation, "Practice and Research on "Singing Diversity" in Ethnic Vocal Music in China". In her introduction to the repertoire for her doctoral graduation recital, she describes in detail how her repertoire is "Singing Diversity". First of all, she researched the local folk songs, for performance accuracy, she interviewed representative local singers who sang folk songs originating from their hometown and discussed how to sing the songs with them. After the discussion, the integration of various factors, combined with her expertise in folk singing, and according to the needs of the show, the selected repertoire to carry out certain re-creative performances, such as through the vocal techniques, diction, clothing, accompaniment, etc., made it very good to present the local folk songs on stage for the promotion do the role of the demonstration. In addition

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to local folk songs, she makes certain re-creations when performing songs in the Chinese opera style, mainly in song diction, breath, and voice techniques, all of which she has her own unique singing experience, which she embodies in her recital performances and dissertation.

Rascha (2009) thinks that re-creation should be based on tradition; this dialogue with the present is a fact when we speak of a musical tradition (or other traditions of artistic expression). When we talk about a musical tradition, we talk about this conversation with the present (or other traditions of artistic expression). Some interpretations of "tradition" tend towards static, linear phenomena, a remnant from an older, pre-modern society, and Rascha continued：

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> As the objects of tradition have constantly been exposed to more or less change and variation, there is no absolute dichotomy between continuity on the one hand and discontinuity and innovation on the other.

The concept of tradition has two sides and does not exclude aspects of the creative process, for example, a song performance can be placed in one of the positions, or it can represent instances of re-creation that occur in the singing and music-making of a single person, both in the past and present. These examples of re-creation frequently overlap; a singer may, for instance, perform a portion of their repertoire in a primarily re-creative, source-oriented manner, adhering closely to the style and performance of the singer from whom the songs are learned in a different context or a different portion of the repertoire. The same person may perform her or his songs in a more transformative manner,

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combining and modifying entire stanzas or tunes, as well as textual and musical phrases.

Thus, the researcher concurs with Rascha, who views "tradition" as a twofold concept representing continuity and change and an object and a process. Therefore, only by being familiar with tradition can we understand how to re-create is also a constantly changing process. Different artists will have different re-creations of the same tradition; only by showing the diversity of re-creation will it be more valuable. Most people who pass on a tune orally alter it in some way during communal re-creation, leaving us with many variations—sometimes exhibiting remarkable diversity, most of the time, the original song is lost or unidentifiable (Nettl, B, 1955).

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From the above several points of view about re-creation, we can conclude that the duty of the re-creator in music performance is to respect the composer's intention and maintain the originality of the composer's musical compositions. Performers have a unique understanding and ability to express musical works emotionally, and they should have subjective tendencies and personal aesthetics to form a personal style.

For this study of vocal performances, the creative work study is conducted from the perspective of a re-creator who is performing but not composing. Singers and instrumental collaborators need to undergo much training and adjustments to finally be able to adequately and convincingly express the emotions of musical works. Sloboda (2000) had a similar idea, and he thought that the performer could, through intentionally

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changing performance parameters, affect the listener's aesthetic and cognitive results, which gives musical performances their expressive quality.

4.4 Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs

This paragraph introduces the melody and vocal techniques of northern Shaanxi folk songs, the melodies will be introduced briefly, including their characteristics and styles, and they will be mainly presented in the form of singing in a recital. This part will focus on the vocal techniques of northern Shaanxi folk songs, including "*Gao Qiang*," "*Ping Qiang*," glissando, trill, and staccato. The table below details the main vocal styles and techniques, the northern Shaanxi dialect, and instrumental collaboration in the selection of songs for this study.

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Table 4.1

List of Northern Shaanxi Folk Song Selection

No	Repertoire	Language	Vocal Technique	Instrumental Collaboration Form
1	*三十里铺* (San Shi Li Pu Village)	Dialect; Mandarin	"*Ping Qiang*"	Piano
2	*二月里见罢到如今* (I have not seen you since February)	Mandarin	"*Ping Qiang*"	Piano and *Zhu Di*
3	*上一道道坡下一道道梁* (Up a beam and down a slope)	Dialect; Mandarin	"*Gao Qiang*"; Glissando	Piano
4	*挂红灯* (Hanging red lanterns)	Dialect; Mandarin	"*Ping Qiang*"; Glissando; Staccato; Trill	Piano
5	*小桃红* (Xiao Taohong)	Dialect	"*Gao Qiang*"; Glissando "*Ping Qiang*"	Piano
6	*山丹丹开花红艳艳* (The flowers blooming on the mountain are bright red)	Mandarin	"*Ping Qiang*"	Piano and *Suo Na*
7	*黄河船夫曲* (The Yellow River boatman's Song)	Dialect	"*Gao Qiang*"; Glissando	Piano
8	*赶牲灵* (Driving a carriage)	Dialect	"*Ping Qiang*"; Glissando	Piano
9	*九里里山疙瘩十里里沟* (Nine miles of mountain bumps and ten miles of ditch)	Dialect; Mandarin	"*Ping Qiang*"; Glissando	Piano
10	*满天的花满天的云* (The sky is full of flowers and clouds)	Mandarin	"*Ping Qiang*"	Piano
11	*羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* (Sheep towel with three blue lines)	Dialect	"*Gao Qiang*"; Glissando	Piano and *Suo Na*
12	*黄河里划桨船对船* (Rowing boat to boat in the Yellow River)	Mandarin	"*Gao Qiang*"; "*Ping Qiang*"	Piano
13	*绣金匾* (Embroidered gold plaque)	Mandarin	"*Ping Qiang*"	Piano
14	*一对对鸳鸯水上漂* (A pair of mandarin ducks floating on the water)	Dialect	"*Gao Qiang*"; Glissando "*Ping Qiang*"	Piano
15	*五哥放羊* (Fifth brother herding sheep)	Mandarin	"*Ping Qiang*"; Glissando	Piano
16	*摇三摆* (Swaying when walking)	Dialect	"*Gao Qiang*"	Piano
17	*兰花花* (Lan Huahua)	Dialect; Mandarin	"*Gao Qiang*"; Glissando; Trill; "*Ping Qiang*"	Piano

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4.4.1 Melody

Northern Shaanxi folk songs have beautiful melodies and distinctive characteristics. From the perspective of melody characteristics, it has a wide range of sounds and uses more big leap intervals. It is often characterized by a pure fourth-degree with a second-degree or two pure fourths used continuously. The special environment and cultural state of northern Shaanxi determine the connotation and structural characteristics of the folk songs and have influenced them. The folk songs have beautiful lyricism and sad singing, a simple and sincere reflection of the northern Shaanxi people's character.

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4.4.2 Vocal Techniques

Among the vocal techniques of northern Shaanxi folk songs, the most representative is "*Gao Qiang*," which differs from those approaches towards reaching high notes in vocal teaching; thus, this section will introduce it in detail based on specific recital selections. In addition, other techniques are also very distinctive, such as "*Ping Qiang*," glissando, trill, staccato, etc., which will also be studied to a certain extent.

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4.4.2.1 "*高腔* (*Gao Qiang*)" Vocal Technique

The study found that the singers of northern Shaanxi folk songs are mainly the old generation and the new generation. The older generation of singers that they sing belong to the Original Ecological (OE) vocal technique. The so-called OE vocal technique refers to an original style that has not been professionally trained or packaged and is widely circulated among people, referred to as Traditional Singing (TS) in this study. The new generation of singers' vocal technique requires certain special training. When singing "*Gao Qiang*," there will be specific differences with the older generation of singers; this study is called New Singing (NS) to distinguish the two vocal techniques.

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However, the differences between the two vocal techniques are mainly reflected in the following aspects: First, in terms of singing language, the older generation of singers sings in pure northern Shaanxi dialects and does not sing in Mandarin, while the new generation of singers' is mainly comprised of dialects supplemented by Mandarin.

Second, the overall timbre of singing is different. The timbre of the older generation of singers uses their voice, which is mainly the real voice when they sing "*Gao Qiang*". It depends on their ability with the voice; since northern Shaanxi is located on the Loess Plateau, it is easy for local singers, but it will be challenging for people from other areas. For the new generation of singers, after specific training, they have a certain way of singing "*Gao Qiang*" that mainly combines real and falsetto.

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Third, the voice resonance is different. The older generation of singers has average voice penetration and less voice resonance when singing. However, the new generation of singers is different; their voices will be fuller, crisper, and more penetrating.

Finally, the approach to vocalizing is different. Generally speaking, the vocal timbre of the older generation of singers are thinner because the thin vocal timbre are more helpful for them when singing "*Gao Qiang*". Hence, they mainly use thin vocal timbre of timbre, while the new generation of singers has broad tones.

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4.4.2.2 "*高腔* (*Gao Qiang*)" Vocal Techniques in Selected Songs

Based on the above research, this study specially selected representative songs, among which the TS songs include "*上一道道坡下一道道梁* (Up a beam and down a slope)," "*黄河船夫曲* (The Yellow River boatman's Song)," "*羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* (Sheep towel with three blue lines)". In contrast, the NS include "*小桃红* (Xiao Taohong)," "*摇三摆* (Swaying when walking)," "*黄河里划桨船对船* (Rowing boat to boat in the Yellow River)," "*一对对鸳鸯水上漂* (A pair of mandarin ducks floating on the water)." There is also a song, "*兰花花* (Lan Huahua)," that uses the combination of the two, which can fully demonstrate the vocal techniques of northern Shaanxi folk songs. The

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following will be based on different work styles, with each example detailing "*Gao Qiang*" vocal techniques.

Song 1 "*黄河船夫曲* (The Yellow River boatman's Song)"

"*黄河船夫曲* (The Yellow River Boatman's Song)" is a typical representative of the northern Shaanxi folk song with a simple and soul-stirring melody. It is a typical song that embodies Traditional Singing (TS). The first section of the song opens with a big leap of fourth intervals, and the second section is connected by two consecutive fourth intervals; the rhythm of the song is relatively simple, the difficulty is that the entire song is in the high-pitched range, which is typical of "*Gao Qiang*".

First, use a straight voice to sing; the voice is just like "straightened," and try not to appear like the trills in Bel Canto singing. Then, the colour of the voice are straight and thin, that is, the natural voice singing without modification; the voice is in place in one step, with no hesitation, especially in "*Gao Qiang*," there should not be a clear boundary between real and falsetto. After much practice and discussion with the instructor, it was found that in addition to the above steps, there is another important technique: breath coordination. The breath and the use of the voice need to be synchronized, especially with the addition of the state of tightening the small abdomen, so that the singing is more

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relaxed, and at the same time the voice of the audience will be more pleasing to the ear. Then, repeat the above steps to find the correct vocal techniques for TS "*Gao Qiang*".



Example 4.1 "*黄河船夫曲* (The Yellow River boatman's song)"

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Song 2 *羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* (Sheep Towel with Three Blue Lines)"

The "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique is the same as the above song, but this song has another technical difficulty, which is the problem of maintaining long and high registers (*Example 4.2*). First of all, the method of finding the timbre mentioned in "*黄河船夫曲* (The Yellow River Boatman's Song)" will not be repeated here. Second, when singing a long beat, the first note begins to adjust the state; the state refers to the psychological and voice states. The psychological state is relaxed, and the voice should be maintained in a

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straight tone and relaxed; through repeated training, master this skill, and then practice long beat holding after proficiency. The volume should not be too loud when singing at the beginning; it is about half the usual and sustained. The most important point is the use of breath; it is necessary to use the fulcrum of the lower abdomen with sustained force to support the vocalizations while singing, and the breath remains expanded. In this way, the ability to maintain high notes can be trained. In addition, this song also needs to cooperate with the accompaniment of piano and *SuoNa* to enhance the expressiveness of the song.



Example 4.2 "*羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* (Sheep Towel with Three Blue Lines)"

Song 3 "*摇三摆* (Swaying When walking)"

Compared with the previous two songs, the style of this song is more cheerful and witty, and the rhythm has become significantly brighter. First, the frequent occurrence of "*Gao Qiang*" in this song raises a new level of vocal technique and requires the performer to be skilled. Secondly, the "*Gao Qiang*" technique in this song requires soft singing, which

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demands the ability to control the voice. In addition to vocal techniques, showing the character's humorous and lively image is also difficult in this song. Although the style of this song is very different from the two songs above, it is also sung in TS. Therefore, some special technical training is required in addition to the previously mentioned vocal techniques for TS.

Specific technical key points: One is flexibility training of the lower abdomen, which is performed by performing the song through the non-stop bouncing of the breath during the singing process. Two, training in "*Gao Qiang*" soft singing way, singing in falsetto first, then slowly transitioning to a combination of real and falsetto, and finally to real voice. However, the volume should always be controlled at the volume of the falsetto at the beginning; even turning to a real voice cannot increase the volume. This process needs to be practiced in sequence, although it is very challenging.



Example 4.3 "*摇三摆* (Swaying when walking)"

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Song 4 "*小桃红* (Xiao Taohong) "

When singing the "*Gao Qiang*" of northern Shaanxi folk songs, the "straight" characteristics of the voice must also be reflected in the NS; this song belongs to this type of song. In this song, the sound is directly sent to the head cavity, and the direction of the sound is in a straight line, similar to the feeling when we 'throw things out' in life.

Taking "Xiao Taohong" as an example, m. 43 and m. 46 appear to be "*Gao Qiang*". When singing this segment, the singer should pay attention to the straight-line characteristics, as the vocal technique applied in this song differs from the TS. First, the whole song is mostly concentrated in the middle and low voice areas, mainly in the real voice. The real voice quickly mixes with falsetto when it turns to the "*Gao Qiang*" part. In other words, the song only mixes the real voice with the falsetto in "*Gao Qiang*," but the rest of the song is still dominated by the real voice, which is of great help in maintaining the unity of the timbre when singing.



Example 4.4 "*小桃红* (Xiao Taohong) "

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Song 5 "*黄河里划桨船对船* (Rowing Boat to Boat in the Yellow River)"

In northern Shaanxi folk songs, male and female duet singing songs are also very common. This type of song usually involves male singing verses with "*Gao Qiang*," female singing verses are rarely used, and the female voice is mainly mixed with real falsetto, the song is a typical representative.

The vocal technique in this song is a typical NS, with full voice of resonance, strong penetration, and strong expression. Practice points: First, the beginning of the song is a pure octave interval, which should be for the characteristics of the song, practice octave singing songs. Find the correct resonance position when practicing; the high and low notes should be produced from the same placement during singing. Two, based on the first step, and then together training for the "*Gao Qiang*," straight, and real falsetto mix, especially to train the key words before the real falsetto conversion. In addition to vocal skills, this song also requires intensive performance practice, and the two singers need to cooperate well and express the song correctly.



Example 4.5 "*黄河里划桨船对船* (Rowing Boat to Boat in the Yellow River)"

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Song 6 "*一对对鸳鸯水上漂* (A Pair of Mandarin Ducks Floating on The Water)"

This song is very popular, not only in northern Shaanxi but also throughout China, and has been adapted into several versions. However, no matter its version, it is adapted from the original mother version. This study mainly studies the popular version in northern Shaanxi.

If "*黄河里划桨船对船* (Rowing Boat to Boat in the Yellow River)" is a work completed by a male and female together, then this song is a work sung by a person but needs to complete the melody of a male and female. Therefore, for this song, it is necessary to strengthen the training in real falsetto conversion. Besides the singing difficulty of "*Gao Qiang*," especially where the interval of ten degrees is very challenging (*Example 4.6*), key points for training beyond the octave: Firstly, learn from the training method of falsetto tenor, this is the practice of pure falsetto during vocal training until the pure falsetto has a certain strength and fullness. Secondly, based on the above step, conduct decomposition exercises for the passages in the song that exceed the octave. Follow the order of real voice—a mixture of real and falsetto, which needs repeated practice until it finds a relatively uniform timbre.

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Example 4.6 "*一对对鸳鸯水上漂* (A pair of mandarin ducks floating on the water)"

4.4.2.3 "*平腔* (*Ping Qiang)*" Vocal Technique

"*Ping Qiang*" is a vocal technique used in traditional Chinese opera initially, primarily in Peking Opera and similar performing arts. It refers to producing sound from the front part of the mouth, resulting in a smooth and soft tone; it is typically used to convey calm, lyrical, or narrative emotions. The combination of "*Ping Qiang*" and dialect has formed a singing style with the characteristics of northern Shaanxi. Thus, the most important feature of the "*Ping Qiang*" vocal technique is to reflect the pronunciation characteristics of the dialect. "*Ping Qiang*" is a way of presenting a straight tone in northern Shaanxi folk song singing, which is characterized by loud and clear, long breaths and has the characteristics of ups and downs. It is the main and the most typical vocal technique in the process of northern Shaanxi folk songs, which is the pearl on top of the folk songs, and "*Ping Qiang*" is the scaffold and cornerstone that supports "*Gao Qiang*". The vocal technique of "*Ping Qiang*" is not as difficult as the "*Gao Qiang*"; when singing, the real voice is the main one, and the vocal technique can be summarized as follows: First,

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language sense training, while singing feels like telling, pay special attention to some special exercises with the characteristics of the characters of northern Shaanxi style, such as the Chinese character reduplication. Secondly, the breath should be kept as smooth as possible, and the whole song can be sung easily. Thirdly, faster flat singing can be trained with staccato techniques. Simply put, "*Ping Qiang*" means being familiar with the dialect of folk songs so that the overall style of the song can be expressed, and this part is discussed in the Shaanxi dialect section below.

4.4.2.4 Glissando Vocal Technique

Glissando is the most common vocal technique in northern Shaanxi folk songs; it is closely related to the local dialect, where descending tones are a prominent feature. This characteristic has been well-preserved in folk songs; among the songs selected for this study, 11 feature glissando.

In northern Shaanxi folk songs, the frequency of glissando is relatively high, but it is not difficult to master a vocal technique; here is a brief introduction. The sense of glissando in northern Shaanxi folk songs is the same as that in other songs; big glissando and small glissando styles are mainly divided by the degree of interval. However, the glissando is also different from others, mainly reflected in two points: first, the glissando will have certain linguistic characteristics, northern Shaanxi dialect is more forthright, so the glissando maintains this temperament. Second, large hop intervals usually dominate

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the glissando, and there are a few small glissando, generally within the third degree. For example, the song "*挂红灯* (Gua Hong Deng)" is a continuous slight glissando. When singing big glissando, we must pay attention to the natural tone, highlight the dialect style, and use flexible and elastic breath, the specific singing methods and techniques will be demonstrated at the recital.; in "*五哥放羊* (*Wu Ge Fang Yang*)," the phrase "*二十三*" is a typical big glissando.



Example 4.7 "*挂红灯* (Hanging red lanterns)"



Example 4.8 "*五哥放羊* (Fifth brother herding sheep)"

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4.4.2.5 Trill Vocal Technique

The northern Shaanxi dialect is mainly presented in a straight tone, so the trill often softens excessive rigidity and is unrestrained; it reflects the tender side of the people in northern Shaanxi. Practice attention points: First, there is a slight vibration of the vocal cords; the northern Shaanxi folk song trill is relatively light. Second, the bounce of the breath and the trills are synchronized. With the vibration of the vocal cords, the breath should also beat slightly accordingly, relying on the twos to practice the trill vocal techniques, which is pretty simple. For example, the song "*九里里山疙瘩十里里沟* (*Jiu Li Li Shan Ge Da Shi Li Li Gou*)" can use the above practice attention points to train and master this vocal technique.

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Example 4.9 "*九里里山疙瘩十里里沟* (Nine miles of mountain bumps and ten miles of ditch)"

4.4.2.6 Staccato Vocal Technique

The vocal technique of staccato is one of the indispensable techniques in northern

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Shaanxi folk songs. It is often used in minor keys, especially at some festivals; cheerful and lively songs play a role in the atmosphere and arouse people's emotions. For example, in the song "*挂红灯* (Hanging red lanterns)," the use of staccato adds interest and liveliness to the song and can help the singer perform better. The basic features of staccato are that it uses real voice to sing, and the pronunciation is short, powerful, and clear. Practice points: First, skip training, as lyrics are used to do the exercises to find the feeling of bouncing. Two, breath control training refers to exercising to control the strength and weakness of the beat until it reaches a level of freedom.



Example 4.10 "*挂红灯* (Hanging red lanterns)"

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4.5 Summary of Vocal Techniques

To sum up, the above several common vocal techniques of northern Shaanxi folk songs are the results obtained through the long-term research practice-led research method. It is these special vocal techniques that constitute their unique charm. The "*Gao Qiang*" vocal techniques are the most characteristic and the soul of northern Shaanxi folk songs. Like

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other vocal techniques, they are also very important for singing northern Shaanxi folk songs. Research has shown that vocal techniques are not a single technique but a combination of many techniques, this is the most important thing for people who want to learn to sing northern Shaanxi folk songs to master these techniques. Northern Shaanxi folk songs have their own unique regional characteristics, especially their melody, which fully reflects the various factors of the region. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the general situation in the area.

Among the vocal techniques, "*Gao Qiang*" is the most difficult; during the actual training process, a certain training plan should be formulated and practiced for a long time to make progress. Particular attention should be paid to distinguishing between "*Gao Qiang*" and high-tune vocal techniques in vocal teaching in colleges and universities; the two cannot be confused, which is crucial for singing northern Shaanxi folk songs. Different songs should have different emotions; their vocal techniques should be for the song to express emotion; they cannot just focus on technology but should be vocal techniques and emotions, so in the training of "*Gao Qiang,*" vocal techniques need to be combined with the actual song for targeted training, and in "*Ping Qiang*," glissando, trill, and staccato, these skills can also be trained in the same way. In short, leaving the actual song to train vocal technique is not very meaningful and will only make the training tedious. As long as the training method is appropriate, one can master these techniques and sing northern Shaanxi folk songs well.

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Northern Shaanxi folk songs occupy a high position in China's national vocal music because they are a special way to understand Chinese history and the northern Shaanxi region. Fortunately, more and more northern Shaanxi folk songs are being adapted and composed by composers, and they are being used in vocal competitions and sung on many occasions. This is a great help to the development, which is gratifying for this study, and the research results can guide those who sing northern Shaanxi folk songs.

4.6 Folk Songs and Dialects of Northern Shaanxi

The northern Shaanxi folk songs are the art form in which the laboring people express their emotions in the northern Shaanxi dialect coupled with a unique melody. Many northern Shaanxi dialect words are used in the folk songs, these words with profound regional characteristics give the folk songs a more down-to-earth aesthetic and allow people to understand better the emotions that the singers want to express. This part mainly studies the diction of selected northern Shaanxi folk songs, summarizes the characteristics of the northern Shaanxi dialect, and compares it with China's official language, Mandarin.

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4.6.1 Characteristics of Northern Shaanxi Dialect

The pronunciation of the northern Shaanxi dialect has its own unique characteristics. At the same time, Mandarin, the official language of China, pays attention to the "*字正腔圆* (*Zi Zheng Qiang Yuan*)," which means that each word must have a standard pronunciation and cannot have its own unique pronunciation. In northern Shaanxi folk songs, there are often fragments of dialects; if one do not understand the dialects, it is difficult to grasp their style. Therefore, it is easier to sing northern Shaanxi folk songs based on the comparison between the dialect and Mandarin in this study.

This study will combine the study of selected songs to summarize the dialects and their characteristics that often appear in northern Shaanxi folk songs, which is of great significance for accurate singing. The northern Shaanxi dialect has four common characteristics: Chinese character reduplication, nasal sounds, special initial pronunciation, and decorative words.

4.6.1.1 Chinese Character Reduplication

Chinese character reduplication are the soul of the northern Shaanxi dialect, with local characteristics; the so-called Chinese character reduplication are words in the form of "...BB". The use of Chinese character reduplication not only enhances the vividness of

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dialects but often adds the effect of "*儿化* (Er Hua)" to the second word. It means that you need to roll your tongue when reading the second word, which is similar to the pronunciation of the Chinese character "*儿*", so it is called "*儿化* (Er Hua)," the second word has little meaning in itself often, but it makes folk songs more rhythmical. For example, the song "*兰花花* (Lan Huahua)" appears in many Chinese character reduplication; when singing these words, pay attention to the "*儿化* (Er Hua)" diction of the second word. For instance, "*兰花花*" is read in Mandarin as "*Lan Hua Hua*," in the northern Shaanxi dialect, but it is read as "*Lan Hua Hua(er)*," and "*英英*" is read as "*Ying Ying(er)*" instead of "*Ying Ying*" in Mandarin diction.



Example 4.11 "*兰花花* (*Lan Huahua*)"

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The table below compares the pronunciation in the northern Shaanxi dialect and Mandarin based on the Chinese character reduplication that often appear in this study's selected northern Shaanxi folk songs and need to be processed when singing.

Table 4.2

Chinese character reduplication in Selected Songs

Word	Northern Shaanxi Dialect	Mandarin
袄袄	ao ao(er)	ao ao
蹦蹦	beng beng(er)	beng beng
扮扮	ban ban(er)	ban ban
道道	dao dao(er)	dao dao
丹丹	dan dan(er)	dan dan
垛垛	duo duo(er)	duo duo
蛋蛋	dan dan(er)	dan dan
肚肚	duu du(er)	du du
对对	dui dui(er)	dui dui
哥哥	ge ge(er)	ge ge
杆杆	gan gan(er)	gan gan
羔羔	gao gao(er)	gao gao
沟沟	gou gou(er)	gou gou
濠濠	hao hao(er)	hao hao
花花	hua hua(er)	hua hua
话话	hua hua(er)	hua hua
驴驴	lv lv(er)	lv lv
凌凌	lin lin(er)	lin lin
梁梁	liang liang(er)	liang liang
箩箩	luo luo(er)	luo luo

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Word	Northern Shaanxi Dialect	Mandarin
林林	lin lin(er)	lin lin(er)
面面	mian mian(er)	mian mian
妹妹	mei mei(er)	mei mei
门门	men men(er)	men men
排排	pai pai(er)	pai pai
坡坡	po po(er)	po po
人人	ren ren(er)	ren ren
扇扇	shan shan(er)	shan shan
闪闪	shan shan(er)	shan shan
实实	shi shi(er)	shi shi
手手	shou shou(er)	shou shou
头头	tou tou(er)	tou tou
洼洼	wa wa(er)	wa wa
线线	xian xian(er)	xian xian
英英	ying ying(er)	ying ying
盈盈	ying ying(er)	ying ying

When singing northern Shaanxi folk songs, one encounters Chinese character reduplication; as long as one understands the correct diction of the dialect, one can find the correct way to sing; this is of great help for singing folk songs in this region.

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4.6.1.2 Nasal Sounds in Northern Shaanxi Dialect

In Mandarin, the articulation process strictly pays attention to the alveolar and velar nasal sounds. However, in the northern Shaanxi dialect, the most obvious feature is that as long as the words are alveolar nasal in diction, they can be regarded as velar nasal. Therefore, when listening to people from northern Shaanxi speak, one often hears a strong velar nasal sound in their accent. There are almost no words with alveolar nasal sounds in the northern Shaanxi dialect, which is an iconic feature of the northern Shaanxi dialect. For example, in the selected song "*小桃红* (Xiao Taohong)," in the phrase "*二老爹娘爱财神*," the word "*神*" is sung as "*Shen*" in Mandarin, but as "*Sheng*" with a velar nasal sound in the northern Shaanxi dialect. Understanding this characteristic of the dialect will greatly help grasp the style of northern Shaanxi folk songs.



Example 4.12 "*小桃红* (*Xiao Taohong*)"

Taking the song selection for this study as an example, there are other similar words, such as in the list below.

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Table 4.3

Nasal Word Pronunciation

Word	Northern Shaanxi Dialect	Mandarin
村	Cun(g)	Cun
跟	Gen(g)	Gen
巾	Jin(g)	Jin
今	Jin(g)	Jin
金	Jin(g)	Jin
尽	Jin(g)	Jin
林	Lin(g)	Lin
门	Men(g)	Men
们	Men(g)	Men
民	Min(g)	Min
拼	Pin(g)	Pin
亲	Qin(g)	Qin
人	Ren(g)	Ren
身	Shen(g)	Shen
问	Wen(g)	Wen
心	Xin(g)	Xin
茵	Yin(g)	Yin
荫	Yin(g)	Yin

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4.6.1.3 Special Initial Pronunciation of Northern Shaanxi Dialect

The initial is before the final consonant, forming a complete syllable with the final consonant. In the northern Shaanxi dialect, characters beginning with the initials "*X* " and "*H*," "*B*" and "*P*," "*W*" and "*E*" have often confused each other, these three groups are the most common, and each group is often confused with the other they are different from Mandarin.

Table 4.4

Special Initial Pronunciation

Word	Northern Shaanxi Dialect	Mandarin
畔	Ban	Pan
我	E	Wo
鞋	Hai	Xie
下	Ha	Xia

This confusion makes the northern Shaanxi dialect more straightforward and honest and makes northern Shaanxi folk songs more friendly and straightforward, such as the song "*三十里铺* (*San Shi Li Pu*). " In the actual singing of "*三哥哥当兵坡坡里下*," the " *下*" is pronounced as "*Ha*" instead of "*Xia*."

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Example 4.13 "三十里铺 (*San Shi Li Pu* village) "

4.6.1.4 Flat Tongue and Curled Tongue in Northern Shaanxi Dialect

In Chinese, there are three groups of corresponding flat tongues and curled tongues, Sounds "Z—*Zh*， C—*Ch*, *S*—*Sh* " are flat tongue sounds, "*Zh*， *Ch*， *Sh* "are all sounds of the curled tongue. During the researcher conversations with people from northern Shaanxi, they often speak confusedly. For example, in the phrase "他是我的知心人" in the song "*San Shi Li Pu*," the word "是" is pronounced "*Si*" instead of "*Shi*," the dialects in many areas of China will not distinguish between flat and curled tongues. This feature is not a significant feature of the northern Shaanxi dialect and will not be explained and studied in detail here.

4.6.1.5 Decorative Words in Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs

Decorative words refer to the lining words used in the lyrics of folk songs, in addition to the main words that directly express the content of the song, to better express the song.

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The use of decorative words in northern Shaanxi folk songs is pervasive; the application of these words can not only highlight the style and local characteristics but also activate the singer's emotions, exaggerate the atmosphere of the song, strengthen the tone, and enrich the melody. For northern Shaanxi folk songs, if the decorative words are removed, their expressive power will be greatly weakened, and the songs will lose their luster. Moreover, the integrity of the song structure will often be destroyed, and the song may even be impossible to sing at all.

Most decorative words in northern Shaanxi folk songs are not directly related to the main words, so they do not belong to the main phrase pattern and have no actual meaning. However, when singing songs, the decorative words can reflect clear emotions, which is indispensable for songs. Commonly used in the song selections of this study are "*哟，噢，哩，哎，呀，嗨，啦*", for example, the use of "*哟*," "*噢*" and other decorative words in the song "*赶牲灵* (Driving a carriage)" plays a transitional role in the connection between phrases, making the whole song more coherent and catchy.



Example 4.14 "*赶牲灵* (Driving a carriage)"

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4.6.2 Summary of Characteristics of Northern Shaanxi Dialect

Generally speaking, since regional characteristics create the features of the northern Shaanxi dialect, it is evident that this dialect diction is also an important part of northern Shaanxi folk songs. Only by understanding the dialect can we sing the folk songs of this place well. There are still specific differences between the articulation of the northern Shaanxi dialect and the articulation of Mandarin. When singing, one should master the basic characteristics of the articulation of the northern Shaanxi dialect. For example, those with prominent characteristics of the northern Shaanxi dialect, such as Chinese character reduplication, decorative words, etc., should be practiced more so that the northern Shaanxi folk songs that are sung have a relatively local pure style.

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4.7 Introduction of the Recital Instrumental Collaboration

There will be two recitals, and the selected songs in the recitals will be both northern Shaanxi folk songs, and the instrumental collaboration will mainly be piano. To enhance the style of the songs and present the original folk songs as much as possible, three songs will be accompanied by Chinese national instruments, *SuoNa* or China *ZhuDi*, which are commonly used as instrumental collaboration.

A total of 17 representative songs are selected for the recitals: 14 are instrumental collaborations by piano, 2 are instrumental collaborations by piano and *SuoNa*, and 1 is

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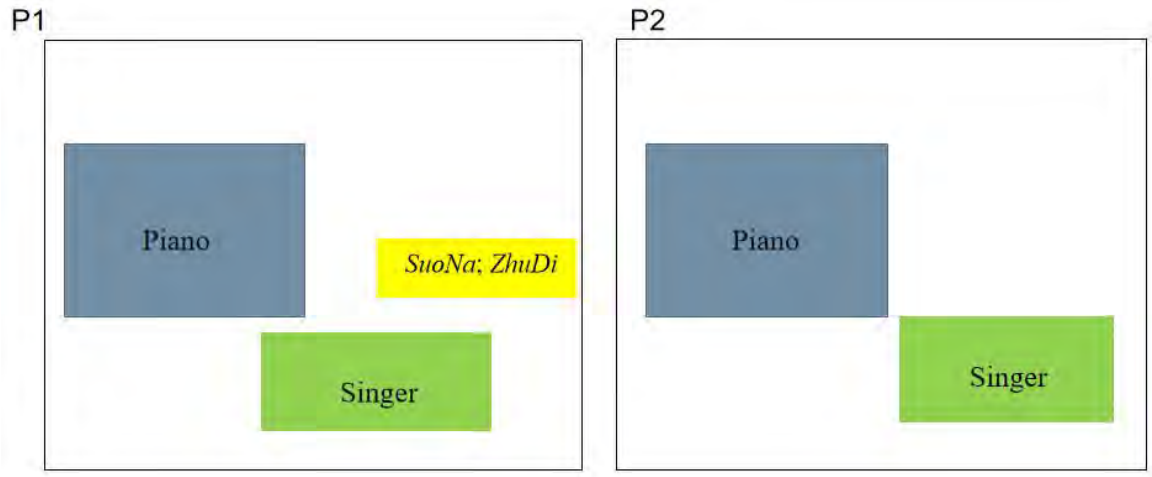
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by piano and China *ZhuDi*. The first one is"*羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* (Sheep towel with three blue lines)"; in this song, *SuoNa* has the role of rendering the atmosphere. *SuoNa* is the first improvised to introduce the emotional tone of the song, and then the singer and piano instrumental collaboration begins to perform. The second song, "*山丹丹开花红艳艳* (The flowers blooming on the mountain are bright red)," adds *SuoNa* as an instrumental collaboration, the *SuoNa* is used in the second paragraph of the song to highlight a vivacious scene and form a question-and-answer performance with the singer. In this way, the performance form will be very distinctive. The song instrumental collaboration by piano and China *ZhuDi* is"*二月里见罢到如今* (I have not seen you since February)." The improvisational instrumental of China *ZhuDi* freely introduces the song, giving people a long-distance feeling, which can enhance the appeal of the song. The stage position during the performance is typically divided into two distinct types.

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Table 4.5

Performers Stage Position



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CHAPTER 5

DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE

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5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a basic overview and description of the performance; it studies the meaning of the lyrics of the performance songs, the style of the songs, the points of attention in the performance, etc., and provides the background and context of the performance songs. The performance repertoires of the recitals are divided into four types according to the theme type: singing about love, singing about characters, singing about life, and singing about the Chinese revolution.

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5.2 Sing About Love

Songs singing about love account for a large proportion of northern Shaanxi folk songs. When expressing love, the lyrics are straightforward and generous, and they dare to love and hate; this is in sharp contrast to the implicitness in the folk songs of southern China. This study selected eight songs about love, including a male-female duet song, which expressed the love aspirations of people in northern Shaanxi. The specific tracks are as follows: "*三十里铺* (San shi li pu Village)," "*一对对鸳鸯水上漂* (A pair of mandarin ducks floating on the water)," "*黄河里划桨船对船* (Rowing boat to boat in the Yellow River)," "*摇三摆* (Swaying when walking)," "*上一道道坡下一道道梁* (Up a beam and down a slope)," "*二月里见罢到如今* (I have not seen you since February)," "*满天的花满天的云* (The sky is full of flowers and clouds)," "*羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* (Sheep towel with three blue lines)".

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5.2.1 "*三十里铺* (*San Shi Li Pu* Village)"

"*San Shi Li Pu* village" is a very typical folk song in northern Shaanxi that expresses love and is adapted from a real-life story. The background of the song is as follows: a girl named "*凤英* (*Feng Ying*)" fell in love with a man named "*双喜* (*Shuang Xi*)" in 1937. Due to the constraints of feudal ethics, free love had become shameful, and they could

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not be together publicly. The following year, "*Shuang Xi*" was forced to marry the arranged partner after being pressured by it, "*Feng Ying*" was deeply saddened when she learned about it (Wang, 2023). "*Shuang Xi*" left to serve as a soldier five years later, though "*Feng Ying*" was reluctant to let him go. Then, "*Shuang Xi*" never returned to the village after he left, as he had died in the war. A neighbor of "*Feng Ying*" witnessed their experience and was inspired to compose this song, the song explores the scene of the impending separation.

The lyrics of this song are closely integrated with the development of music, simple and approachable, so it has become a classic folk song. This song has three paragraphs in total: the first paragraph is "*Feng Ying*"'s psychological monologue, and the second paragraph is "*Shuang Xi*"'s description of him comforting "*Feng Ying*" when he saw that she was sad. The third paragraph expresses "*Feng Ying*" 's emotional outburst after he left. When singing this song, the main vocal technique is "*Ping Qiang,*" special attention should be paid to the distinct emotional changes in the three paragraphs, which is also a difficult point of this song as each paragraph is practiced separately. There are obvious changes in the second paragraph's music, mainly reflected in two aspects. First, the rhythm beat changes from 2/4 to 3/8, and the second is the change in music speed; these two changes are made to express the scene of the upcoming departure and create an anxious atmosphere. This paragraph is the strongest expression of the emotion of the song; both the performer and the observer need to pay attention to the difference between the first two paragraphs and their sharp contrast with each other.

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5.2.2 "*一对对鸳鸯水上漂* (A pair of mandarin ducks floating on the water)"

It is a love song based on folklore, and the background of the song is as follows: A man was born and raised north of the mountainous *Shenmu* City in northern Shaanxi. In the neighboring village, there was a woman of the same age as him; both of them liked to practice martial arts but were egotistical about their skills. Once, while they were competing and fighting with each other, they fell in love later. One day, they came to a pool and saw a pair of Mandarin ducks in the water, and were deeply moved and decided to make their own life together. This song not only shows the boldness of the northern Shaanxi people in embracing love in the face of a traditional society that frowns upon such acts but also expresses their tenderness and romance. The couple hopes that they can love each other until they grow old, the song describes inner thoughts and expresses firm feelings of love.

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The song repeatedly uses the comparison method to describe loyalty to love and hopes that the lover can understand and express the same feelings as their own. In this song, the vocal techniques are "*Gao Qiang*," glissando, and "*Ping Qiang*". The singing difficulty of this song is mainly "*Gao Qiang*"; for example, in the phrase "*山丹丹开嘞花山沟沟里俏,*" (*Example 5.1*) there is a leap of ten intervals. Usually, singers practice paying attention to the training of the big leap interval. In singing "*Gao Qiang*," the main technical difficulty is the problem of real falsetto conversion; the singers practice attention and undergo intense training in leaps and real falsetto fusion. Because the

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number of "*Gao Qiang*" appears more, one needs to continue repeated practice to ensure that the quality of singing each time is maintained instead of being compromised.



Example 5.1 "*一对对鸳鸯水上漂* (A pair of mandarin ducks floating on the water)"

5.2.3 "*黄河里划桨船对船* (Rowing boat to boat in the Yellow River)"

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This song is a classic male and female duet song in the opera "*米脂婆姨绥德汉* (*Mi Zhi Po Yi Sui De Han*)," expressing the scene that displays the shy affection of two people who like each other but have not officially determined the relationship.

The vocal techniques are "*Gao Qiang*" and "*Ping Qiang*," and the melody span of this song is relatively large. However, it is tough to perform as it makes use of the skills to make the singing voice straightforward, giving people a high, distant, vigorous impact sense. The lyrics are very distinctive, using Chinese character reduplication continuously to demonstrate the style and local culture fully. In addition, the performance requires the cooperation of men and women, showing the rowing scene on the Yellow River, which requires the performers to undergo relevant performance training and multiple rehearsals.

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5.2.4 "*摇三摆* (Swaying when walking)"

This folk song is one of the representative works of northern Shaanxi folk songs with its catchy melody and high-pitched, humorous, and exciting rhythm. "*摇三摆*" describes how a girl walks and how these three words run throughout the song to deepen the distinctive portrayal of the female image. The lyrics express the idea that a girl's "*一摇三摆* (*Yi Yao San Bai*)" when walking makes men very attracted to her. In order to see the girl's face, the man could not help but follow the woman home. Nevertheless, the girl reached home and did not come back out, so the man left and returned the next day, hoping to catch a glimpse of her, but instead of meeting the girls, he met her mother. The mother thought the man was a bad guy and hit him with a pot lid. The man was so frightened that he ran away but returned the next day. As a result, he met the girl's father and was hit twice with "*烟袋* (*Yan Dai*)". The scene is considered quite humorous, and the song is completed in a relaxed and humorous atmosphere.

The man's occupation is that of a "*脚夫* (*Jiao Fu*)," which was a particular occupation for the poor people in the barren land of northern Shaanxi in the past. Forced to make a living, they went to the "*河套* (*He Tao*)" area of Inner Mongolia to look for work, travel, and do business. They rode horses and lived in the open air all year round, and they have bitter stories of struggle in Loess. This song's vocal techniques have two aspects: "*Gao Qiang*" and a unique vocal technique called tongue vibrato, this vocal

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technique should be used when singing the word "*得儿* (*De'er*)." The lyrics are very distinctive and bring forth the humorous and exciting side of the northern Shaanxi dialect.



Example 5.2 "*摇三摆* (Swaying when walking)"

5.2.5 "*上一道道坡下一道道梁* (Up a beam and down a slope)"

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It is a "*信天游* (*Xin Tian You*)" style of northern Shaanxi folk song. It tells the story of young men and women's yearning for love and describes the hardworking people living in a rough and barren land. Since northern Shaanxi is located on the Loess Plateau, "*坡* (*Po*)" and "*梁* (*Liang*)" are special topographies in this area (the specific shapes are as shown below in the picture); in China, there is a saying called "*横坡竖梁* (*Heng Po Shu Liang*)," it means that "*Po"* is horizontal and "*Liang*" is vertical. In this song, "*Po*" and "*Liang*" describe a long distance, and this song expresses the feeling of missing the beloved, looking at "*Po*" and "*Liang*" as seeing the sweetheart. Singing this song gives people a long, vast feeling as if standing on the "*Po*" and "*Liang*," the singers sing in a manner that makes the distance feel real to the listeners. It is a typical song with a strong

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"*Gao Qiang*" style. In addition to correctly using "*Gao Qiang*" vocal techniques, special training is also required to reflect the far-reaching sound; the special training here refers to the training of some shouting cavities. The training is performed in order to create an image during the song, like the feeling of transferring the sound from the top of the mountain to the bottom of the mountain, from the shore of the lake to the other side. The training makes the feeling of distant and vast sounds feel real, accompanied by one's imagination.



Picture 5.1 "坡 (Po)"

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Picture 5.2 "梁 (Liang)"

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5.2.6 "二月里见罢到如今 (I have not seen you since February)"

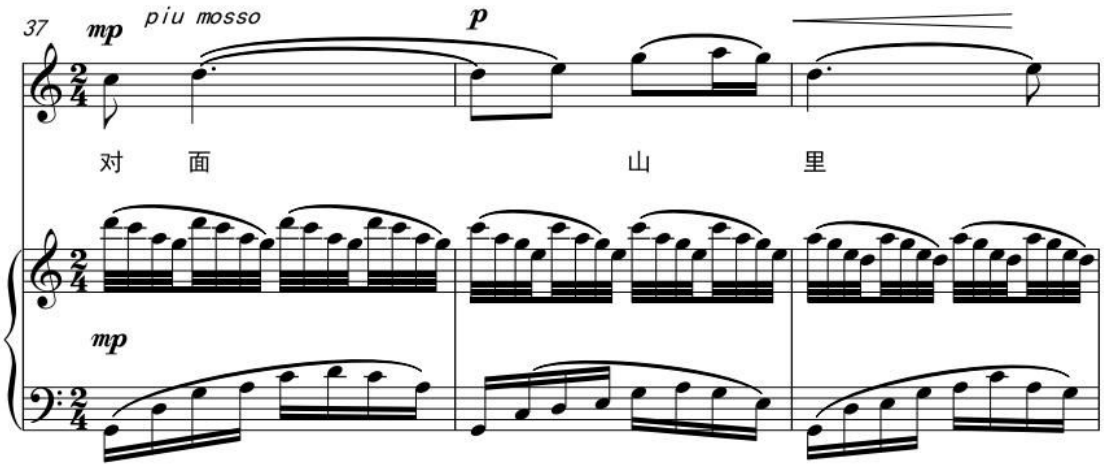
This is a love song; the lyrics tell the story of a woman missing her lover since February. When she and her sweetheart met, it had been long since she had seen him again. The specific 'now' from February does not clearly mention how much time has passed since February; this writing technique creates a vast imaginative space and makes the song timeless.

For singing this song, the vocal technique is "*Ping Qiang*" in a telling tone. The song is composed of three parts, the first and the third being similar, while the second

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part has obvious changes, mainly manifested in the change of rhythm and emotion, and the speed becomes faster than the other two. At the same time, the texture of the piano accompaniment is also dense and continuous, and thirty-two dense musical notes appear (*Example 5.3*). This makes it easy to show the urgency that the character experiences, for instance, when the woman sees water in front of her and thinks that her lover has returned, explaining her desperation to see the face of the sweetheart. The music in the first and third paragraphs is gentler, more comfortable, and quieter, which is a noticeable contrast to the second paragraph. When singing this song, one must pay special attention to handling the feelings between the three paragraphs.



Example 5.3 "*二月里见罢到如今* (I have not seen you since February)"

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5.2.7 "*满天的花满天的云* (The sky is full of flowers and clouds)"

This song is an episode of the TV drama "*血色浪漫* (*Xue Se Lang Man*)," a TV series broadcast in 2004. The main content of the drama is to reflect on the last century, from 60 to 90 years, of the young people in the northern Shaanxi region of joy and sorrow, sweet and bitter, reality and dream between all kinds of contradictions and conflicts.

The musical elements of this song are selected from northern Shaanxi folk songs, and the "*Ping Qiang*" vocal technique is the key to singing. From the musical charm, one can clearly distinguish its local style and musical characteristics, but there are certain adaptations; it can be said that this is an innovative song in the northern Shaanxi style. The song expresses the impulse and passion of young people for youthful love; lovers standing on the "*Po*" and "*Liang*" affectionately call each other. The song is full of freedom and randomness, and the way it is sung reflects the feelings of longing between lovers. The tune of this song is natural and straightforward, especially using the fourth and fifth intervals, which is a typical feature of northern Shaanxi folk songs. The lyrics in this song are full of northern Shaanxi culture, "*绣* (*Xiu*)" and "*针* (*Zhen*)" in the lyrics a typical description of rural women doing "*Xiu*" and "*Zhen*" work at home in northern Shaanxi in the last century. The woman misses her sweetheart and embroiders bags while she waits for her husband to come home. The highlight of this song is the lyric "*哥啊*";

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the two words use shouting cavity singing, long and emotional, sounds more graceful and moving.

5.2.8 "*羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* (Sheep towel with three blue lines)"

This song is a typical representation of "*Xin Tian You*" in the classification of northern Shaanxi folk songs, and the song's melody is simple. It has a free rhythm and a high voice, which is the main representative of the "*Gao Qiang*" vocal techniques of Traditional Singing (TS). "*Xin Tian You*" is so special because it is closely related to the special geographical environment of northern Shaanxi. There are numerous ravines in northern Shaanxi, with few people habituating the vast land, when talking to others, they have to shout way for listening clearly. For a long time, habits have created the characteristics of "*Xin Tian You*" in this style of folk song; specific notes are often elongated, and the rhythm is a free phenomenon.

In this song, the "*羊肚肚手巾* (Sheep towel)" is a typical attire worn by men in northern Shaanxi. The "*三道道蓝* (three blue lines)" are the decorative patterns on the handkerchief; the reason why it is dressed up like this is related to the geographical environment. Because there are often sandstorms in northern Shaanxi, covering the head with a white towel can prevent the invasion of wind and sand and avoid the sun. Secondly,

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it can also be used to wipe sweat when working in the fields. The song depicts two lovers in northern Shaanxi, the man herding sheep on the mountain and the female passing through the mountain, who can see each other but are far apart. Therefore, they can only wave to convey the thoughts of each other's hearts, describing the meeting, but cannot speak. The emotional tone of the whole song is sadness, desolation, and more of helplessness. The woman slowly walks away, and the man can only cry alone in the "*沙蒿蒿林* (*Sha Hao Hao Lin*)" in front of him, which fully demonstrates the delicacy of men in northern Shaanxi and their loyalty to love.

5.3 Singing About Characters

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The songs of singing characters in northern Shaanxi folk songs are very distinctive, clear descriptions of characters in different industries. In this study, four songs are selected, each of which has its own characteristics, they are: "*小桃红* (Xiao Taohong), "*五哥放羊* (Fifth brother herding sheep), " "*黄河船夫曲* (The Yellow River Boatman's Song)," "*兰花花* (Lan Huahua)".

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5.3.1 "小桃红 (Xiao Taohong)"

This song has a person's name as its title; it shares a few similarities with "兰花花 (Lan Huahua),″ but it is quite different. Three lyrics in this song express a girl's longing for her sweetheart in chronological order. In the northern Shaanxi area of the old society (Before 1949), men and women could not love freely, and there was a traditional feudal mentality that favored boys over girls. "*Xiao Taohong*"'s parents love money and want her to marry the rich, but the "*Xiao Taohong*" has a favorite person in the heart. This song expresses the girl's desire for free love and the hatred of feudal thought.

The vocal techniques of this song are "*Gao Qiang*" and "*Ping Qiang*," the sound range is wide, the range is b-d^3, the sound range is more than two octaves across, relatively difficult to sing, and real to falsetto conversion techniques appear frequently, this is also a major feature of "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique. Besides, the pronunciation of the song is an important reflection of the style of the song in the northern Shaanxi dialect, especially the Chinese character reduplication such as "弯弯," "蹦蹦" and so on. When singing this song, one needs to use the technique of crying. The purpose is to show the heroine's "*Xiao Taohong*" feelings of helplessness and longing, as she can only look at the moon at night and cry secretly.

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5.3.2 "*五哥放羊* (Fifth brother herding sheep)"

This song is a typical representative of "*小调* (*Xiao Diao*)" in the northern Shaanxi folk song category. The song tells the love story of a young lover, a girl, and her fifth brother the girl is the daughter of a wealthy man in northern Shaanxi, and the fifth brother is a day laborer from a poor family. They fall in love with each other at first sight, however, their status is very different. In the feudal society, their love was difficult to recognize, so fifth brother has never dared to reveal himself, but the girl is a brave and unrestrained character. From their acquaintance to getting along, the girl was more proactive and cared for fifth brother. In the end, the girl's sincerity touched fifth brother's heart. He had not dared to ask for her hand in marriage, but now he wanted to marry her as soon as possible and looked forward to their wedding day.

The vocal techniques used in this song are "*Ping Qiang*" and glissando. The song expresses a positive spirit that dares to break feudal ethics and reflects the pursuit and bravery of people in northern Shaanxi who advocated freedom at that time. The characteristics of this song are the change in each month of a year to describe the girl, true feelings for fifth brother the extensive use of decorative words in the lyrics to enhance the character, and also the intimacy of this song.

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5.3.3 "*黄河船夫曲* (The Yellow River boatman's Song)"

The Yellow River is China's mother river and flows through northern Shaanxi, people drink the Yellow River water and have a certain reverence for it. This song is "*号子*(Hao Zi)" a representative of northern Shaanxi folk songs with "*Gao Qiang*" vocal techniques of Traditional Singing (TS). This song has simple language, a simple melody, and high-spirited emotions; it embodies the perseverance of the boatmen in northern Shaanxi who dared to fight against their fate under challenging conditions. It embodies the boatman's optimistic and uplifting spirit of fighting the Yellow River. The mood of the song is cheerful, which makes people imagine that the Yellow River is broad and deep, and it sings the love of the people of northern Shaanxi for the Yellow River.

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The "*黄河船夫曲* (The Yellow River Boatman's Song)" is written specially; there are two paragraphs of lyrics: the first paragraph is a question, and the second paragraph is an answer. The lyrics are simple, but they echo the melody, and the melody is mainly characterized by repeated phrases, which is also a typical feature of "*Hao Zi*" songs. The melody lines give people a swaying feeling as if they are on a boat. The speed is slow, and the rhythm is very free and straightforward, but the voice must have a certain power when singing the song; in this case, this song's "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique is different from other songs. The performer needs to be able to sing "*Gao Qiang*" and sing powerfully, which requires high vocal techniques.

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5.3.4 "兰花花 (Lan Huahua)"

It is not an exaggeration to say that this song is the calling card of northern Shaanxi folk songs; this song is very well-known in China, and the song is based on a true story. "*Lan Hua Hua*" was born in Yan'an City in 1919; her original name was "姬延玲 (*Ji Yanling*)." Because she was very beautiful, just like the flower, she was named "*Lan Hua Hua*" by the villagers. When she grew up, she fell in love with a Red Army soldier; before the wedding day, the soldier was assigned to the front line to participate in the war. But not long after, her husband died, and her parents married her to another rich man; her parents took it upon themselves to marry her off to someone else. In that times, women in northern Shaanxi had to obey their parents' arrangements for marriage; they hated this feudal thought and died of depression. After the soldier came back from the war, he heard about "*Lan Hua Hua*"'s experience and wrote this song. The original song has very few melodies and phrases, so in order to better perform the song, this research has selected an adapted version.

This song expresses the image of a woman who bravely fights against the forces of old society and has the right to pursue freedom and independence. This song is dynamic in terms of emotional expression; the song has three paragraphs: the third paragraph is a reproduction of the first paragraph, and the second paragraph expresses "*Lan Huahua*"'s strong resistance to the fate of the brave. In this song, the combination

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of Traditional Singing (TS) and New Singing (NS) is the "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique used, so this song is very characteristic.

5.4 Singing About Life

Many themes in northern Shaanxi folk songs are about all kinds of life scenes and states; the common songs people's lives are singing harvest, festivals, etc. Three songs were selected in this study: "*赶牲灵* (Driving a carriage)," "*九里里山疙瘩十里里沟* (Nine miles of mountain bumps and ten miles of ditch)," "*挂红灯* (Hanging red lanterns)".

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5.4.1 "*赶牲灵* (Driving a carriage) "

The song is a type of "*信天游* (Xin Tian You)" in northern Shaanxi folk songs that express the "*脚夫* (Jiao Fu)" professional life scene and heartfelt wishes. Due to the mountainous Loess Plateau in northern Shaanxi, most of the supplies needed for daily life were transported by mules and horses. So "*Jiao Fu*" became an ancient profession in this area; the "*Jiao Fu*" is accompanied by animals such as camels, mules, horses, or donkeys, as many people in the countryside believe that animals have spirituality, that is why "*Jiao Fu*" is also called "Driving a carriage" person (Wang&Li, 2005).

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The melody of the song is simple and rich with humorous charm. The whole song comprises three paragraphs, with three sections of the same melody but different lyrics. The first paragraph expresses the family's care for "*Jiao Fu*" for him outside often. The second paragraph expresses "*Jiao Fu*," the professional man vulnerable to rural women's respect and favor because he can always bring people the necessary things and is often careful of people's expectations. The content of the third paragraph is that because there are many "*Jiao Fu*," driving the animals can take at least ten days or even several months. The families of the "*Jiao Fu*" often miss them and often ask the "*Jiao Fu*" to drive the animals passing by. Whenever she sees "*Jiao Fu*," she hopes that her lover returns, and the song describes the feeling of missing her beloved. The melody of this song is very simple and vast, the vocal technique is "*Ping Qiang*"; therefore, all the diction characteristics of the Shaanxi dialect are present in this song. The song also has a very strong folk flavor, giving people a rough, simple feeling.

5.4.2 "*九里里山疙瘩十里里沟* (Nine miles of mountain bumps and ten miles of ditch) "

This song mainly describes the scene where the country vigorously developed agriculture after founding New China and built water conservancy projects in Shaanxi for irrigation and flood and drought prevention measures, showing a beautiful picture of people's happiness and health. Describing donkeys, green poplars, willows, and lambs shows the happy life scenes of the rural people who lived in a new cave-dwelling in northern

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Shaanxi at that time. Caves are the most representative dwellings in the Loess Plateau region of northern China and contain the historical legacy of dwellings of the northern ethnic groups.

The song adopts the music style of "*Xin Tian You*" in northern Shaanxi and vividly depicts the current situation of people's free and comfortable lives, highlighting their enthusiasm. Consists of three sections in total; the first and third sections have free rhythm, an extended melody, and a slow speed. The second paragraph becomes dense and faster, contrasting the style with the other two paragraphs. The vocal techniques used in this song are "*Ping Qiang*" and glissando. In particular, the emotion of this song should be sung, so the language sense training in the "*Ping Qiang*" technique is well demonstrated in this Song and is particularly important.

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5.4.3 "挂红灯 (Hang red lanterns) "

This song expresses the lively scene of the spring festival; every new year in northern Shaanxi, every household likes to hang red lanterns at home, which indicates that the new year will be prosperous and auspicious. The song uses a lot of decorative words, which play a great role in exaggerating the warm atmosphere, supplementing the emotion of the lyrics, and beautifying the melody and musical structure. The song's rhythm is bright,

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strong, and expressive, with the character providing ample space for stage performances. The melody has great ups and downs and a wide range; in addition to the common leaps of fourth and fifth intervals in northern Shaanxi folk songs, large leaps of octaves are also widely used. The vocal techniques used are very complete and have four types. They are "*Ping Qiang*," glissando, staccato, and trill. These four techniques are used interchangeably to express people's joyful mood.

5.5 Singing About Chinese Revolution

Northern Shaanxi folk songs play an important role in the history of the Chinese Revolution because the musical materials of many Chinese revolutionary songs are taken from northern Shaanxi, and this type of song accounts for a large proportion. Two very representative songs were selected in this study: "*山丹丹开花红艳* (The flowers blooming on the mountain are bright red)" and "*绣金匾* (Embroidered gold plaque*)*".

5.5.1 "*山丹丹开花红艳* (The flowers blooming on the mountain are bright red)"

This song is one of the most famous folk songs in northern Shaanxi; it is well-known in China. Its creation is closely related to the word "Revolution" during the war years; folk songs played an important role in the revolution, and excellent folk songs can be used to train soldiers and enhance morale. In the revolutionary era, soldiers had little spiritual life,

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and revolutionary songs were indispensable and important spiritual food for them after fighting. Revolutionary songs have the function of improving their unity, cooperation, and combat capabilities. This song uses many folk music materials from northern Shaanxi and fills in lyrics related to the revolution.

This song shows the people of northern Shaanxi's support for the revolution, as well as the people of northern Shaanxi's strong sense of national responsibility and inner goal of progress. It expresses the people's revolutionary emotions and their desire for a better life after the revolution. Because of the beautiful and distinctive melody of northern Shaanxi folk songs, they were soon widely spread.

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The song has rich, expressive power, a beautiful melody, and varied styles; it has four sections. The vocal technique is "*Ping Qiang*"; the second section has warm music and a cheerful rhythm, which shows the happy mood of soldiers and common people. It is essential to strengthen this section, as it is faster and more interactive and can only be done if one is sufficiently skilled in the "*Ping Qiang*" technique. The other three sections have similar music, melodies, and lyrics, showing different scenes of revolution. In the lyrics, a large number of Chinese character reduplication and decorative words are used, such as "*山丹丹*" and "*红艳艳*" enhancing the emotional expression, making people feel particularly intimate and full of life.

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5.5.2 "*绣金匾* (Embroidered gold plaque)"

This is a song that sings about the revolution, embroidered gold plaque which is a way of livelihood and custom for the working people in northern Shaanxi. They use needles and threads of various colors to embroider exquisite patterns on the cloth. The patterns are usually based on scenery and people, and some also embroider Chinese characters. They decorate a glass frame to form a gold plaque, which people often hang on the wall in their homes to indicate good luck and peace.

This song expresses the common people's gratitude to China's revolutionary leaders, so they embroidered the leaders' pictures on plaques to express their respect and support for them. This song is relatively easy to sing and has fewer high notes, but the melody is straightforward to remember, so it is also very popular in northern Shaanxi. On the whole, the speed of this song is stable, and there is no special rhythm type. The vocal technique is "*Ping Qiang*," and it is easier to master, but the difficulty of this song is the grasp of the singing emotion. The melody repeats three consecutive times, but the content of the lyrics is completely different, and the emotions expressed also change significantly, which tests the basic skills of the performers.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

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Folk songs are the expression of working people's hearts and feelings, the renowned Chinese famous writer *Lu Xun* said "what is national is international". Northern Shaanxi folk songs have gradually evolved into songs that conform to the characteristics of each era since their birth. Local folk songs are not only an art form but also a part of history; therefore, inheriting and developing them is an obligation and responsibility that we, as music professionals, should uphold. This study summarizes through literature research on northern Shaanxi from multiple aspects, including the culture, dialects, and geographical environment, that constitute important components of northern Shaanxi folk songs. At the same time, these factors are also the main determinants of the vocal techniques and other characteristics of the folk songs; only by having a comprehensive understanding of them

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can we perform northern Shaanxi folk songs with ease and proficiency.

This study summarizes vocal techniques and finds that they are diverse rather than single, among them, "*Gao Qiang*" is the most difficult and also the most styled with northern Shaanxi; this study focuses on the technique of "*Gao Qiang*" and summarizes it into two forms, one is Traditional Singing (TS) and the other is New Singing (NS), there are apparent differences in many ways. Singers in the TS category have basically not received professional training, but their singing is very distinctive. First of all, the "*Gao Qiang*" is sung with a real voice, which requires extreme vocal conditions for the singer; basically, only the older generation of local singers in northern Shaanxi can do it. Secondly, singing in the northern Shaanxi dialect, they thought that only the dialect can correctly express the meaning of the song. Furthermore, the sound of TS has less resonance and relies on the singer's own timbre. In the NS, the singers have received professional training. When singing "*Gao Qiang*," they mainly rely on a combination of real and falsetto; the timbre of the voice are thicker and more resonant, and they sing in Mandarin and northern Shaanxi dialect. In general, each singer in TS has different characteristics; they learn to sing folk songs on their own or by word of mouth with some other singers. Therefore, these singers have little in common with their "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique. The singers have specific training methods in NS; they master the vocal technique after training, and there are specific rules and more commonalities in this way of singing. They sang "*Gao Qiang*," which is a great learning reference for people in other regions who want to learn northern Shaanxi folk songs.

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After many times of practice and actual singing experience, the researcher believes that the NS style is more suitable for promotion and popularization: first, there are methods for training that do not rely entirely on the learner's own vocal conditions; second, the language used is mainly Mandarin, which is easier for people who are not familiar with the northern Shaanxi dialect to learn. In terms of vocal techniques, the combination of real and falsetto makes it easier to practice and develop the "*Gao Qiang*" vocal technique, while singing with only real voice is more challenging for the technique. In addition to the above factors, northern Shaanxi folk songs are already very famous locally. If they are to be better developed and promoted, they should keep pace with the times, absorb the advantages of other singing methods while retaining their own core style and musical elements, and form a systematic theory and vocal technique. Only when more people feel that learning to sing them is not difficult can they gradually become popular and developed.

The dialect is an important part of singing good northern Shaanxi folk songs. In this study, after a field investigation of local singers, farmers, and relevant literature, the typical diction features of the northern Shaanxi dialect are summarized and compared with those of the Mandarin. In the northern Shaanxi dialect, Chinese character reduplication, initial, nasal sounds, and so on, are full of local characteristics, especially the frequent use of Chinese character reduplication, which makes this dialect very attractive and gives people an impression of approach ability and simplicity. The diction characteristics of the back nasal sound are closely related to the long-term local geographical environment; mastering the typical diction of these dialects is the key to

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singing folk songs well. In order to illustrate their characteristics more clearly, this study summarizes some of the words with typical dialectal characteristics in the selected songs. It compares them with Mandarin in the form of a table so that they can be understood more intuitively.

The vocal techniques and the northern Shaanxi dialects are two important components for singing well; this study summarizes vocal techniques such as "*Gao Qiang*," "*Ping Qiang*," glissando, trill, and staccato through selected songs. Also, in summary, the characteristics of Chinese character reduplication, decorative words, special initials, flat and curled tongues in the northern Shaanxi dialect are systematic study of northern Shaanxi folk songs that can provide some reference value for those who study this folk song.

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Although there are a large number of northern Shaanxi folk songs, after research, it was found that they can basically be divided into four categories according to their themes: love, life, character, and the Chinese revolution. This study selected representative songs from each category and described them in detail, for example, the background of each song, the vocal technique, and the situation of the singing language. Northern Shaanxi has been relatively feudal and backward for a long time in Chinese history; from their folk songs, we can feel their yearning for a better life. At the same time, they also expressed various misfortunes and sufferings in life through folk songs; therefore, the melody always has some sad and desolate style in it, and these expressions of true feelings laid a solid foundation for the development of the songs. This is also an

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important factor why local people love northern Shaanxi folk songs and can occupy a place in Chinese folk songs.

The Shaanxi folk songs composed in recent years have shown a trend toward a variety of forms and styles, but in general, they have retained their basic melodic characteristics. However, in order to promote and improve publicity, the singing language is mainly Mandarin, and some newly created songs are entirely sung in Mandarin, which is the most significant change. Although some songs still retain a small amount of dialects, the actual effect is not very good. From the researcher's point of view, the dialect of a place is like a label for that region. In the same way, folk songs leave the dialect will lose its label, as China's intangible cultural heritage should not be abandoned just to adapt to the current popular trend. However, how can we achieve both inheritance and development? First of all, the core components of folk songs should be preserved, such as melody characteristics, "*Gao Qiang*," and typical dialect diction, on the basis of a particular innovation. Secondly, new arrangements of old songs have been made; this style of creation has become more popular in China in recent years. Many ancient poems have been written as songs by composers and have been widely circulated. Specifically, traditional folk songs are adapted using modern compositional techniques and song styles. Such attempts have also been made in northern Shaanxi folk songs, such as "*梦中的兰花花*" and "*信天游再唱东方红*" and so on, but overall, there are still too few songs in this category.

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Furthermore, to further strengthen the training of professional talents, although the researcher participated in the project of training professional talents, both the number and scale were still relatively small, with only 30 people participating in it, and more than half are locals. This is only the first time we have been selected for talent training across China. Obviously, further expansion is a way to promote the development of northern Shaanxi folk songs.

This study takes practice-led as the primary research method; after many practical exercises, it has basically completed the summary of the vocal techniques of northern Shaanxi folk songs and performed the research results in the form of recitals, forming a combination of theory and practice, the research objectives were successfully achieved and. Those who want to do related research in the future, whether at the theoretical level or the singing practice level, have great reference value. It is hoped that with this study as a new starting point, the northern Shaanxi folk songs will be further studied by more scholars so that they can better contribute to the development of vocal techniques.

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APPENDIX A1 POSTER 1 PHD RECITAL 1



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APPENDIX A2 POSTER 2 PHD RECITAL 2



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APPENDIX A3 RECITAL SCORES

No	Repertoires	Page
1	*三十里铺* San shi li pu Village	1
2	*二月里见罢到如今* I haven't seen you since February	5
3	*上一道道坡下一道道梁* Up a beam and down a slope	11
4	*挂红灯* Hanging red lanterns	13
5	*小桃红* Xiao Taohong	18
6	*山丹丹开花红艳艳* Morningstar lily bloom with brilliant red colour	22
7	*黄河船夫曲* The Yellow River boatman's Song	29
8	*赶牲灵* Driving a carriage	33
9	*九里里山疙瘩十里里沟* Nine miles of mountain bumps and ten miles of ditch	36
10	*满天的花满天的云* The sky is full of flowers and clouds	41
11	*羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝* Sheep towel with three blue lines	44
12	*黄河里划桨船对船* Rowing boat to boat in the Yellow River	47
13	*绣金匾* Embroidered gold plaque	51
14	*一对对鸳鸯水上漂* A pair of mandarin ducks floating on the water	56
15	*五哥放羊* Fifth brother herding sheep	62
16	*摇三摆* Swaying when walking	68
17	*兰花花* Lan Huahua	73

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1 三十里铺

San Shi Li Pu Village

陕北民歌
徐振民编配



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2

23

四 妹 子 今 年 一 十 六， 人 人 说

28

咱 二 人 天 配 就， 你 把 妹 妹 闪 在 半 路 口。

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34

凤 英 呀 凤 英

rit. ***pp***

39

你 不 要 哭， 三 哥 哥 走 了 回 来 哩，

f ***mp*** ***mf***

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3

45

rit. tempo rubato

有 什 么 话 儿 你 对 我 说， 心 里 不 要 害

dolce

rit. tempo rubato

51

allegro

急。 洗 了 个 手 来

accel.

mf

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56

和 白 面， 三 哥 哥 吃 了 上 前

p

61

线， 任 务 拟 在 定 边 县，

p

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4

66 *rit. rubato* **Tempo I** ***p***

三 年 二 年 不 得 见 面。 三 哥 哥

rit. rubato

71

当 兵 坡 里 下， 四 妹 子

3 ***p***

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75

脸 畔 上 灰 不 塌 塌， 有 心 拉 上

80 *rit.*

知 心 话， 又 怕 人 笑 话。

p *rit.*

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2 二月里见罢到如今

I haven't seen you since February

陕北民歌
向音编曲

Moderato



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2

21

百 灵子 鸟 儿 满 沟里 飞,

27

看 不见 哥 哥 在 哪 里, 看 不 见 哥 哥

33

在 哪 里.

p

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66

前 沟里有 雨 后 沟里 流, 看 不见 哥 哥

72

走 的哪条 路, 看 不见 哥 哥 走 的哪条

77

路.

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提示：考试时，建议演唱第1—55小节，然后接第78小节至结束。

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3 上一道坡坡下一道梁

Up a beam and down a slope

陕北民歌

中速 较慢



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10

下 一 道 哎 咳 梁 哎 哎 想 起 了 那 个
崖 畔 上 的 那 个 站 哎 哎 把 我 们 的那 个
我 在 哎 嗨 嗨 沟 哎 哎 探 不 见 的那 个

13

小 妹 妹 哎 哟 哟 哎
年 轻 人 哎 哟 哟 哎
拉 话 人 哎 哟 哟 哎

16

D.C

好 心 慌 哎 哎 哎 嗨嗨。
心 扰 乱 哎 哎 哎 嗨嗨。
招 一 招 手 哎 哎 哎 嗨嗨。

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4 挂 红 灯

Hanging red lanterns

陕 北 民 歌
鞠 秀 芳 改编
沈传薪配伴奏

Andantino



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17

我 要 和 那个 三来哥 哥 过 上 新 年
我 给 我 那个 三来哥 哥 扇 风 凉

21

曾 本儿依 本儿 曾 呀 本儿 呀 花 花 儿依 乎 依 乎 红

mp

25

花 花儿依 乎 红 呀 红 呀 绿 个 英 英

mf

29

f

rit.

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15



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Andantino



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5 小桃红

Xiao Taohong

孟宗伋词
孟宗伋曲
杨霖希配伴奏

Adagio 哀婉 悲切地



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2

24

问， 单个蹦蹦还是奴家一个人。

p f p f

29

二更子

f marcato p p

34

月儿树梢上动， 倒坐门槛我泪盈

mp

40

盈， 俭畔上溜过来奴家的干哥哥，

f marcato mp marcato

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45

小妹 妹 笑格盈盈 点着一盏 灯。

8va

mp mp cresc. ff espress.

51

三更 子

marcato mp p dolce

56

月儿 照门门来， 双扇 扇门 来我

pp

61

单扇 扇 开， 浑身 身呀上下 就冰个凌凌

mp f marcato mp

marcato

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6 山丹丹开花红艳艳

The flowers blooming on the mountain are bright red

陕 西 民 歌
李若冰、关鹤岩 词
徐 锁、冯福宽
刘 锋编曲
吴 慰 云配伴奏



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Allegro 热烈地

32

38

44

*1.*千 家 万 户 哎 咳哎 咳 哟，把 门 开
*2.*热 腾 腾儿的 油 糕 哎 咳哎 咳 哟，摆 上 桌
*3.*围 定 亲 人 哎 咳哎 咳 哟，热 炕 上 坐

50

哎 咳哎 咳 哟，快 把 咱 亲 人 迎 进 来，
哎 咳哎 咳 哟，滚 滚 的 米 酒 捧 给 亲 人 喝，
哎 咳哎 咳 哟，知 心 的 话 儿 飞 出 心 窝 窝，

8

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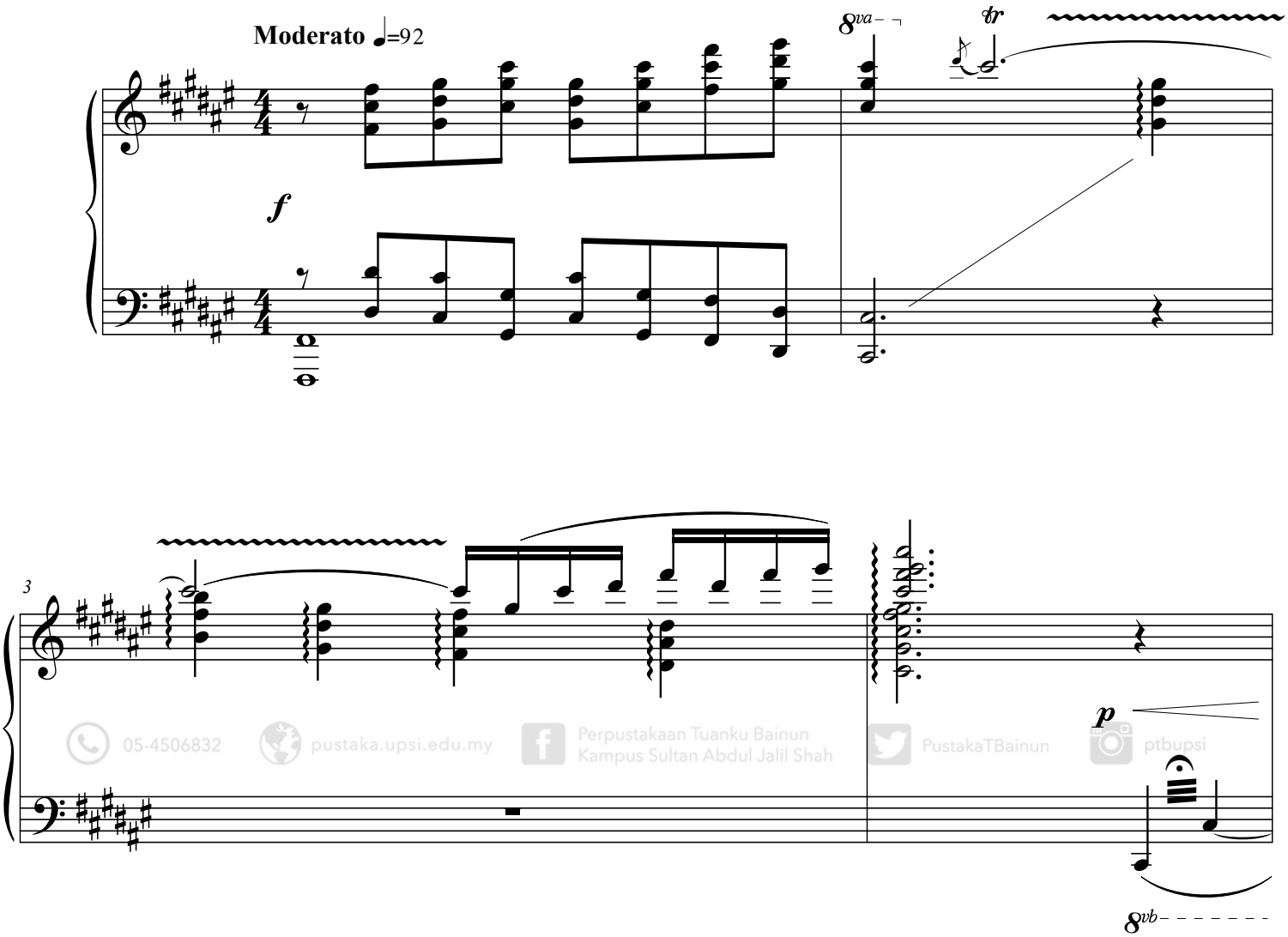


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7 黄河船夫曲

The Yellow River boatman's Song

陕 西 民 歌
黎英海配伴奏





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2

7

几 十 几 道 湾 哎，
九 十 九 道 湾 哎，

mp *p*

8vb

9

几 十 几 道 湾 上
九 十 九 道 湾 上

p

(8vb) 8vb

11

f

几 十 几 只 船 哎，
九 十 九 只 船 哎，

p

(8vb) 8vb

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più mosso

13

几 十 几 只 船 上
九 十 九 只 船 上

13

p

8vb

15

几 十 几 根 杆 哎，
九 十 九 根 杆 哎，

15

p

(8vb)

8vb

17

几 十 几 个（那） 艄 公（哟 嗬） 来 把 船 来
九 十 九 个（那） 艄 公（哟 嗬） 来 把 船 来

17

f

non rti.

(8vb)

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32

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19

1.

搬？

搬。

tr

8va

19

21

2.

p

哎

哎

九 十 九 个（那）

8va

21

f

8vb

23

rit.

艄 公（哟 嗬）来 把 船 来 搬。

8va

23

rit.

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8 赶牲灵
Driving a carriage

陕 西 民 歌
黎英海配伴奏



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13

(哎 呀) 带 上 的 (那 个) 铃 子
(哎 呀) 赶 牲 灵 的 (那) 人 儿
(哎 呀) 你 不 是 我 的 哥 哥

13

p *mf*

17

1

(哟, 噢) 哇 哇 的 (那 个) 声。
(哟, 噢) 过 (呀) 来
(哟, 噢) 走 你 的 (那 个)

17

9

1

mp

21

2

了。

8va

21

8va

2

mf

tr

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8va

25

mp

9

29

3.

p

路。 （哎 呦） 你 不 是 我 的

29

mf

mp

34

ad lib.

rit.

哥 哥 （哟，噢） 走 你 的 （那 个） 路。

34

mp

39

rit. morando

8va

39

p

pp

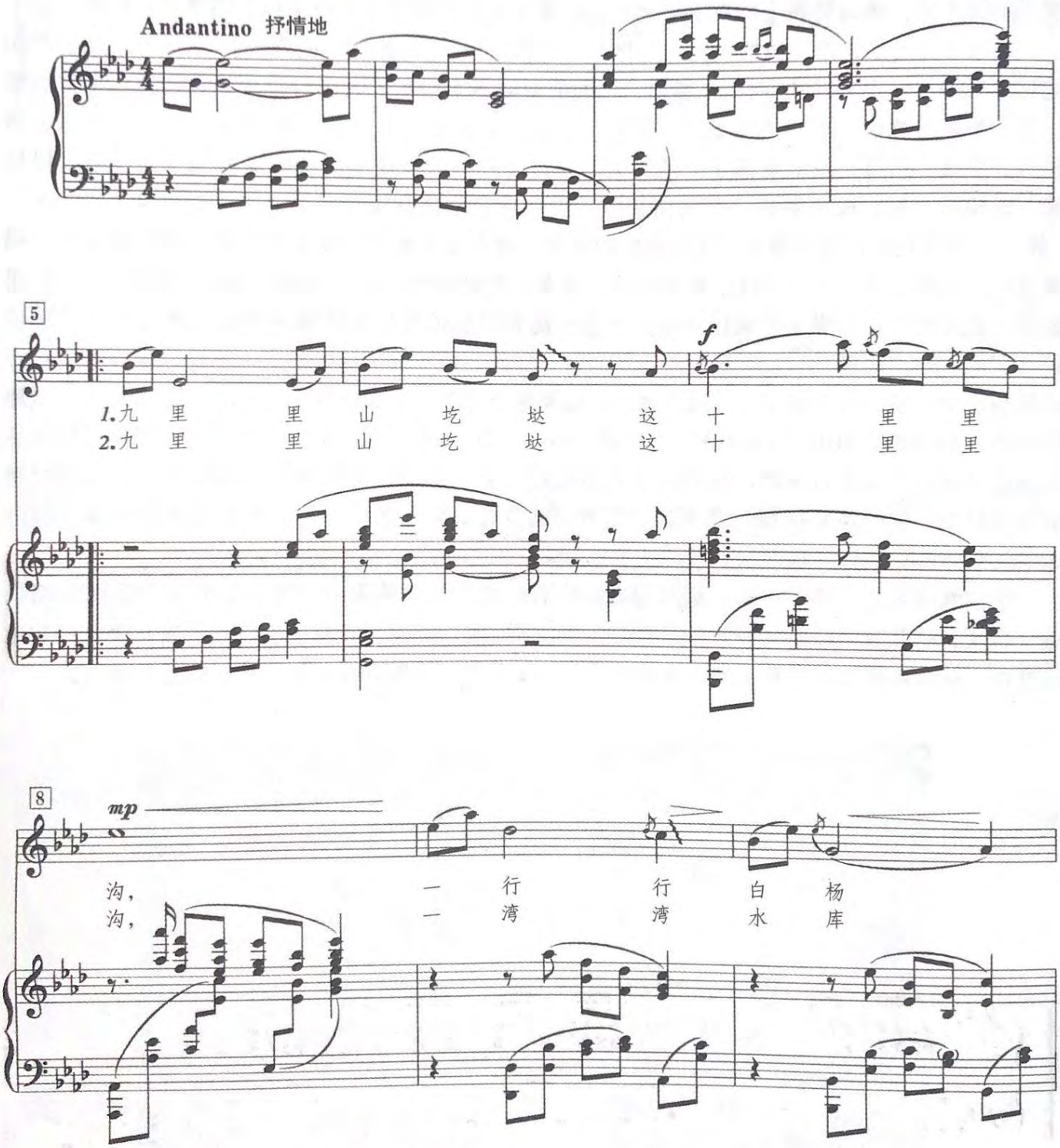
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9 九里里山疙瘩十里里沟

Nine miles of mountain bumps and ten miles of ditch

许 敏 岐词
吕 远曲
刘思同配伴奏



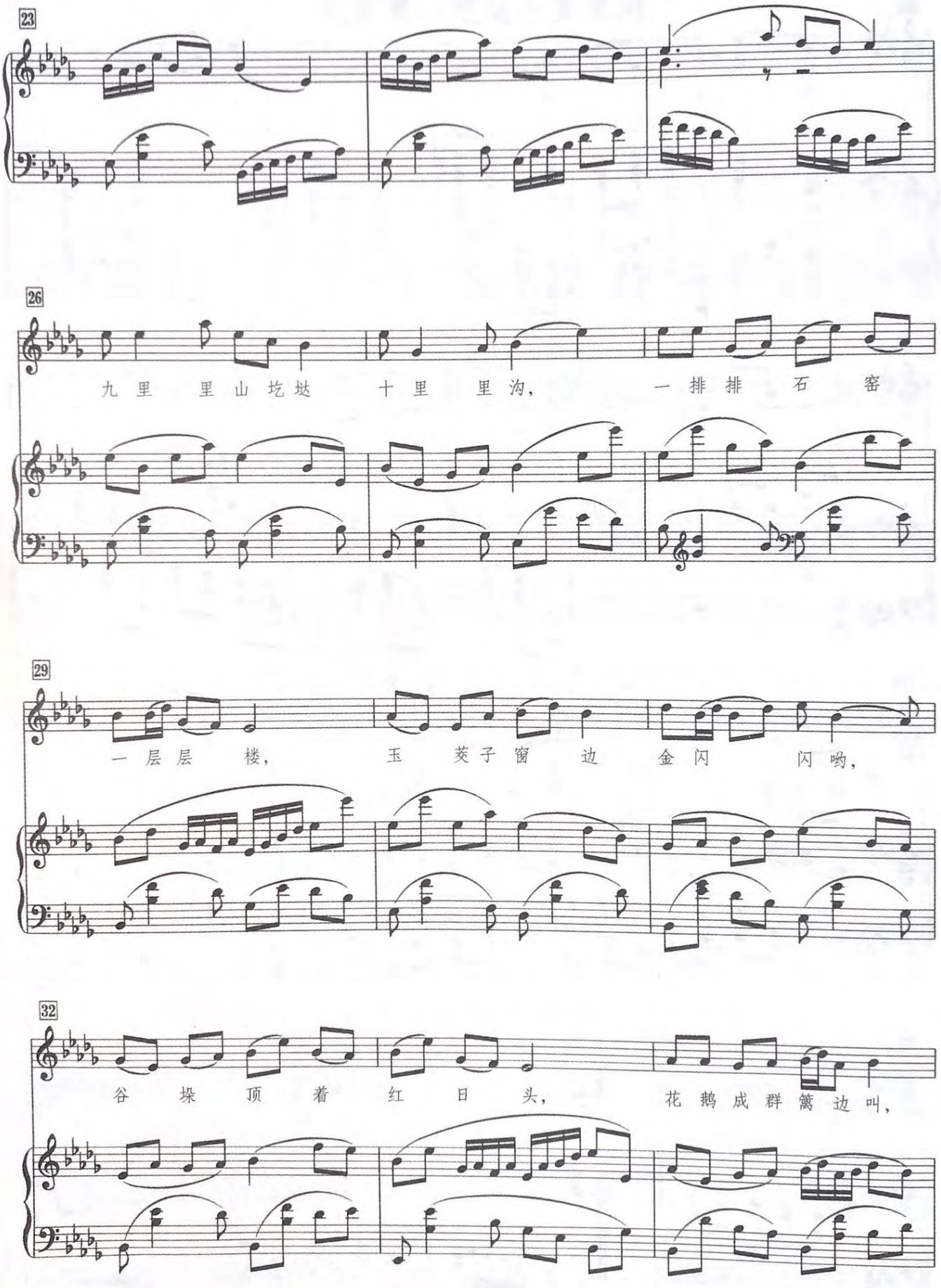
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10 满天的花 满天的云

The sky is full of flowers and clouds

陕 北 民 歌
王燕妮配伴奏

中速 深情地



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7

妹 绣荷 包 一 针 针， 针 针 都 是 想 那 心 上的 人。

9

哥 呀。

11

我 前半 响绣 后半 响绣，

mf

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11 羊肚肚手巾三道道蓝

Sheep towel with three blue lines

陕北民歌
杨霖希配伴奏




18
1.羊(啦)肚子 手 巾 (哟) 三 道 道
2.一 个 在那 山 上 (哟) 一 个 在(那)
23
蓝, 咱们 见 个面 面 容 易, (哎呀)拉 话 话 儿
沟, 咱们 拉 不上 (那) 话 话, (哎呀)招 一 招(个)
28
1.
2.
难。 手。
8va
3
3


32
了 不见那 村 村 （哟） 了 不见 个
37
人， 我 泪 （格）蛋 蛋 抛 在， （哎呀）沙 蒿 蒿
42
林。 我 泪 （格）蛋 蛋 抛 在， （哎呀）沙 蒿 蒿
8va
47
林。
(8va)
mf
mp
ppp

12 黄河里划桨船队船

Rowing boat to boat in the Yellow River

秧歌剧《米脂婆姨绥德汉》主唱段
（男、女声对唱）

白 阿 莹 词
赵 季 平 曲
冯季勇配伴奏

♩=63行板 热情地

（石娃唱）

黄 河 里
白格生 生 那个

划 桨 哟 忽 悠的那个 闪 毛 眼 眼 那个
脸 蛋 蛋 苗格 条 条的 腰 走 过 了 那个

瞭 哥 哥 瞭的哥哥心 里 乱
崖 畔 畔 崖 畔畔山 也 摇

有 心 看妹妹 家 中 寒 只 有 一 副
红格茵 茵小口口 歌 声 飘 树 林 林 的山 雀 雀

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25

不 图 你的人 来 不 图 你 的钱 啊

p

28

单 图 你 那 好 嗓 弦 好 嗓 弦

mf *f* *mp*

32

（石娃唱）

山 丹 丹 那 个

f *mf*

35

开 花 红 艳 的那 个 艳 想 你 的 那 个

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50



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13 绣金匾

Embroidered gold plaque

陕 北 民 歌
杜鸣心配伴奏

Moderato 赞颂地



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31

了， 金 區 绣 咱 毛 主 席

37

领 导 的 主 意 高。

f

43

dim.

49

2. 二 月 里 刮 春 风， 金 區 绣 的

mp

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55

红， 金 匾 上 绣 的 是

61

救 星 毛 泽 东。

f

67

dim.

73

Andante

3. 一 绣 毛 主 席， 人 民 的 好 福
4. 二 绣 总 司 令， 革 命 的 老 英

mp

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79

气，　　您　一　心　为　我　们，
雄，　　为　人　民　谋　生　存，

85

我　们　拥　护　您。
能　过　好　光　景。

mf

91

rit.

dim.

Adagio

97

5. 三　绣　周　总　理，　　人　民　的　好　总

p

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103

理， 鞠 躬 尽 瘁 为 革 命，

103

109

我 们 热 爱 您。 鞠 躬 尽 瘁

109

115

rit.

为 革 命， 我 们 热 爱 您。

115

dim.

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14 一对对鸳鸯水上漂

A pair of mandarin ducks floating on the water

陕北民歌
黎琦编词
李兴池记谱整理
周媛配伴奏



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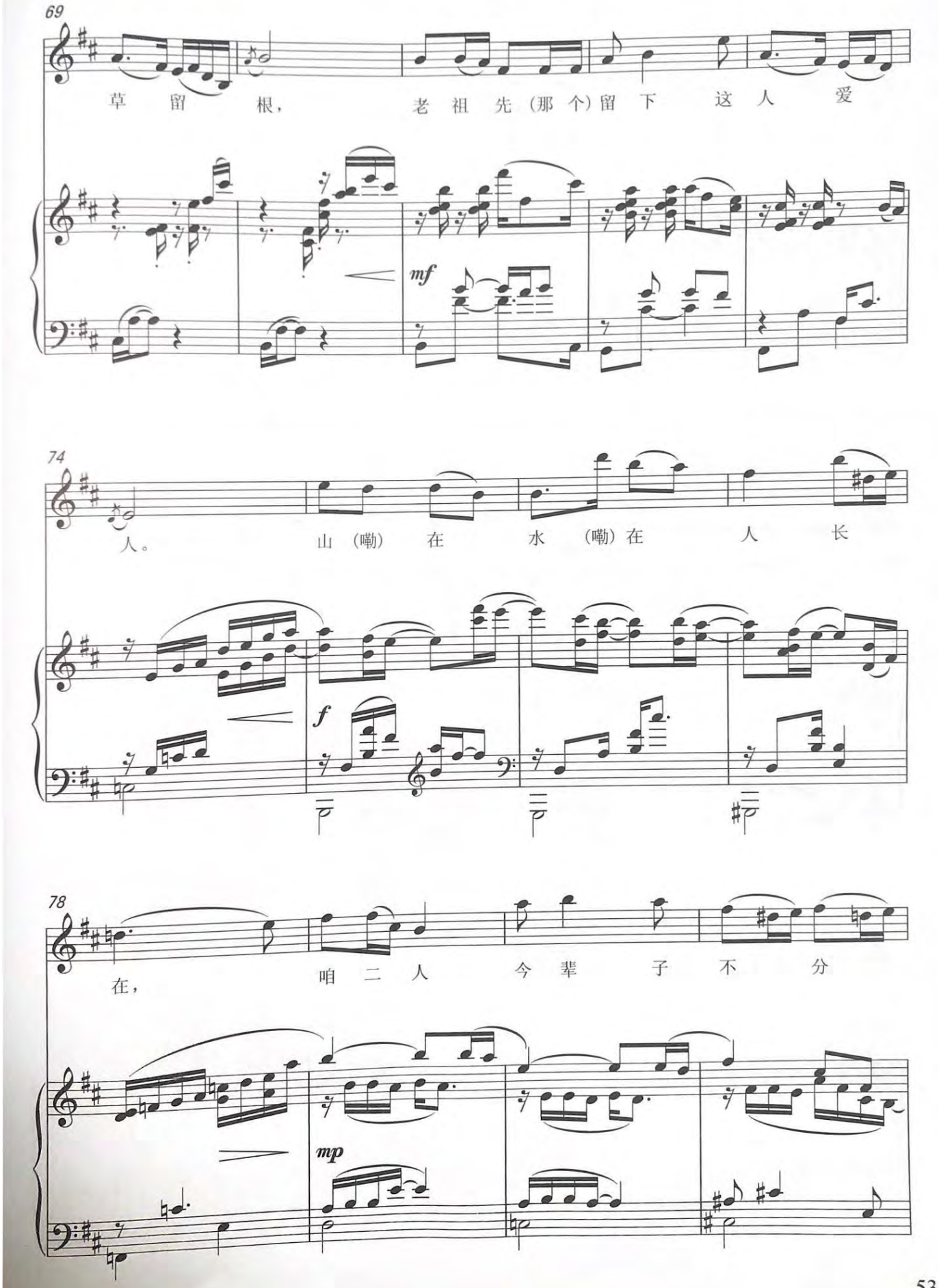
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15 五哥放羊

Fifth brother herding sheep

陕 西 民 歌
吴慰云配伴奏



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16 摇三摆

Swaying when walking

陕北民歌
张凯制作

rit.

8va

12 6

6

rit. 大摇 大摆 哎啦哎得儿

rit.

6 12

12

呦 大格路上来 你把你那白格脸脸掉过来

19

哎 摇三摆 你说调过

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2

25

就调过 哎啦哎得儿呦 你就给我掉过来 我把我那

31

Presto

灰心事就说出来 摇三摆。

38

头一回我

45

眛妹妹呀哎 得儿呦 你呀不在 你爸爸给了我

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52

两 烟 袋 哎 摇 三 摆。 第 二 回我

59

眊 妹 妹呀 哎 得儿呦 你 又 不 在 你 妈 妈 给 了 我

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66

两 锅 盖 哎 摇 三 摆。 头 一 回

73

眊 妹 妹 你 呀 不 在 二 一 回 眊 妹 你 又 不 在

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4

80

两 锅 盖 两 烟 袋 哥 哥 我 全勒白 挨

88

Lento

两 锅 盖 两 烟 袋 哥 哥 我 全勒白 挨

96

你 给 哥 哥 上 一 对

99

哎 啦 哎得儿呦 牛 啦鼻鼻 鞋 哥 哥穿 上

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104

格噔 格噔 看 你 来 摇 三 摆 你 把你 那

110

白 格脸 脸 掉 过 来 摇 三

115

摆。

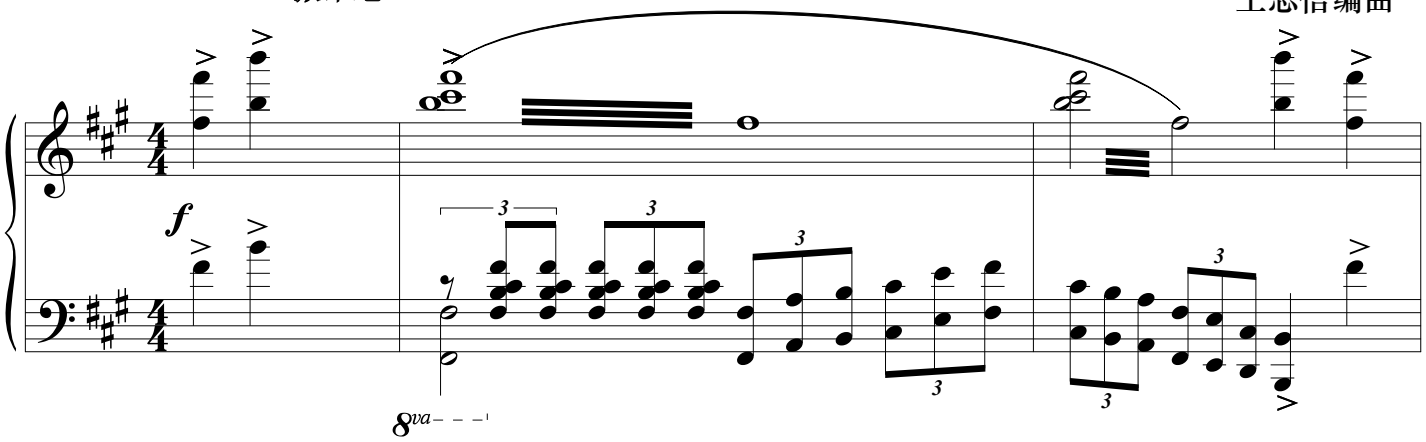
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17 兰花花

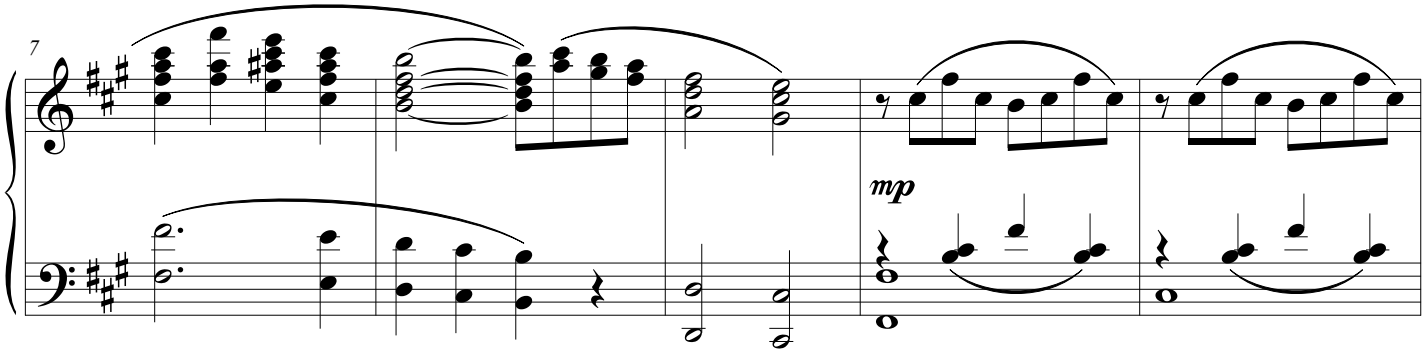
Lan Huahua

陕北民歌
王志信编曲

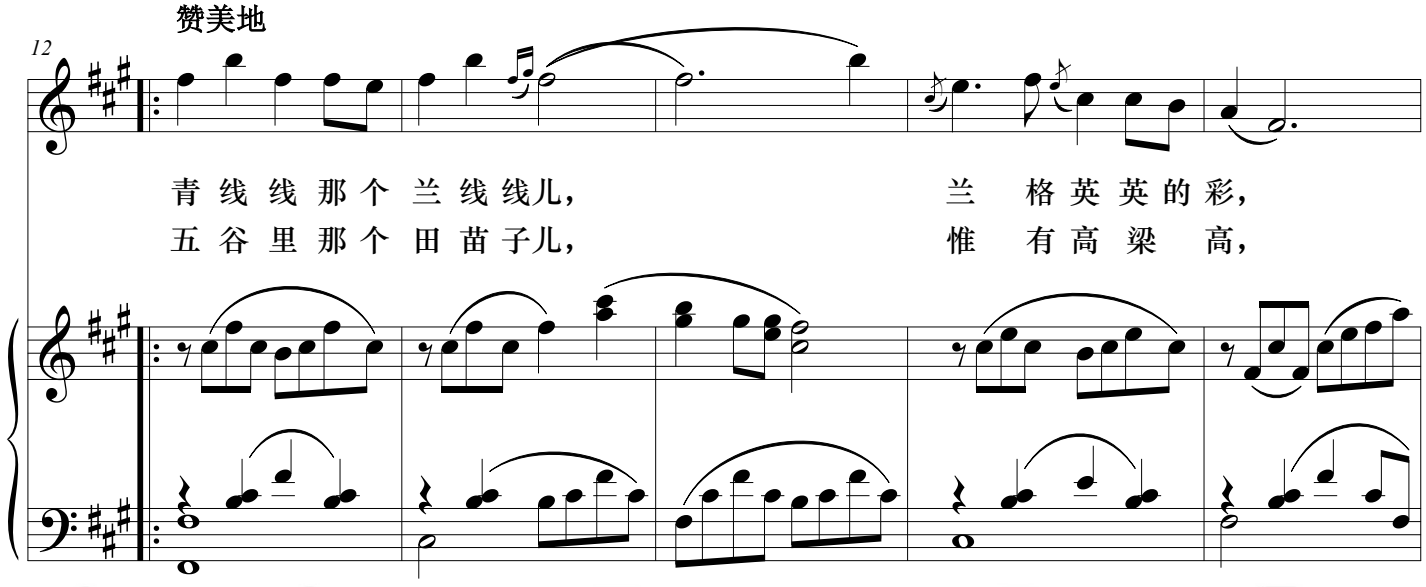
Moderato 激昂地







赞美地



青线线那个兰线线儿，　　兰格英英的彩，
五谷里那个田苗子儿，　　惟有高粱高，

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17

1. 2.

生 下一 个 兰 花 花 实 实地爱死个人。 好。

一 十三省的 女 儿 哟 数上那个兰花花

强烈地

22

f

26

rit.

慢一倍 悲痛地

31

正 月 里 那个 说 媒， 二 月 里 订，

mp

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62

69

愤怒、反抗地

兰 花 花 下 轿 来， 东 望
你 要 死来你 早 早的 死， 你 早

76

西 找， 找 见 周 家的 猴 老 子， 好 像 那
早 的死， 前 晌 你 死 来， 后 晌 我

83

1. 2.

一 座 坟。 兰 花 花 走。

f

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130

rit.

138

ff

我 见 到 我 的

ff

141

情 哥 哥 哟， 有 说 不 完 的

144

话 哟， 咱 们 两 个 死 活 哟

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