

The Rapid Change of Singing Technique of Dong Folk Songs

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Abstract

The Dong people, an ethnic minority group in China known for their rich cultural heritage, have a long tradition of singing folk songs that reflect their history, customs, and way of life. The singing technique of Dong folk songs has undergone rapid change due to various factors. The singing technique of Dong folk songs, deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the Dong ethnic group in China, has undergone rapid transformations in recent times. This academic paper delves into the evolution and contemporary dynamics of Dong folk song performance practices, analyzing the factors contributing to these changes and their implications on the preservation and innovation of this traditional art form. Through a blend of historical analysis and contemporary observations, this study aims to shed light on the intricate interplay between tradition and modernity in the context of Dong folk song singing techniques.

Dong music stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of the Dong ethnic group, encapsulating their cultural identity, relationship with nature, and artistic creativity. By delving into the nuances of Dong singing techniques and linguistic influences, we gain a deeper appreciation for the intrinsic connection between music, language, and cultural heritage in the vibrant tapestry of Dong musical traditions.

Keywords: The Rapid Change; Singing Technique; Dong Folk Song

Introduction

Dong folk songs, a treasured part of the rich tapestry of Chinese cultural heritage, have long captivated listeners with their haunting melodies and poignant lyrics. Originating from the Dong ethnic group, primarily residing in China's Guizhou, Hunan, and Guangxi provinces, these songs serve as more than just musical expressions — they embody the collective history, traditions, and emotions of a people deeply connected to the land they inhabit. However, beneath the surface of their enchanting allure lies a complex research problem that demands further exploration. Dong folk songs are an integral aspect of Dong culture, permeating various aspects of life — from festivals and rituals to everyday gatherings. Characterized by their unique polyphonic singing style, where multiple voices intertwine in intricate harmonies, these songs often narrate tales of love, nature, and community. Passed down through generations orally, Dong folk songs carry within them a wealth of cultural knowledge, reflecting the beliefs, values, and struggles of the Dong people across centuries (Yang, 2009).

Despite the profound cultural significance of Dong folk songs, several critical research gaps persist, presenting a compelling avenue for scholarly inquiry. Many Dong folk songs remain undocumented or inaccurately recorded, risking the loss of invaluable musical heritage. Addressing methods for comprehensive documentation and preservation is crucial to safeguard these songs for future generations (Hu, 2022).

Dong folk songs, steeped in tradition and history, stand as a poignant reflection of the cultural identity of the Dong ethnic group in China. Central to the allure of these songs is the unique singing technique employed by Dong singers, characterized by intricate harmonies and polyphonic textures that weave together to create mesmerizing melodies. While this singing technique has captivated audiences for generations, delving into its nuances unveils a fascinating research problem that beckons exploration (Wang, 2014). At the heart of Dong folk songs lies a distinct singing technique that sets them apart from other musical traditions. Dong singers, often in groups, employ a polyphonic style known as "heterophony," where multiple voices simultaneously sing variations of the same melody, creating a rich tapestry of sound. This technique requires a deep understanding of vocal control, pitch accuracy, and harmonic synchronization, making Dong folk song performances a testament to the skill and artistry of the singers (Zhu, 1988).

Understanding the physiological mechanisms behind the unique vocal production in Dong folk songs can illuminate how singers achieve the signature harmonies and timbres characteristic of this tradition. Exploring vocal techniques, breath control, and resonance modulation sheds light on the mastery required to execute these songs with precision. Cultural Transmission and Pedagogy of Dong folk songs is passed down through generations offers insights into traditional pedagogical methods and oral transmission practices. Examining the role of mentors, community gatherings, and informal apprenticeships in shaping singers' skills can inform strategies for preserving this knowledge in a rapidly changing world (Li, 2011).

Delving into the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of Dong folk songs' singing technique allows for a deeper appreciation of the cultural significance of these performances. Analyzing how harmonies evoke specific moods, narratives, or spiritual connections provides a window into the profound impact of music on listeners and performers alike. Contemporary Relevance and Innovation: Considering how Dong folk songs' singing technique adapts to contemporary contexts, such as stage performances, collaborations with other genres, or recording technologies, highlights the dynamic nature of traditional music practices. Exploring innovative approaches to preserving and promoting this heritage while respecting its authenticity is essential for ensuring its longevity (Yao, 2002).

From Background and research problem, Therefore, the researcher needs to study the Rapid Change of Singing Technique of Dong Folk Songs serves to uphold cultural legacy, foster artistic growth, deepen interdisciplinary understanding, assess community impacts, shape educational efforts, and contribute to the broader discourse on cultural preservation and diversity. By recognizing the significance of these changes, researchers can play a vital role in ensuring the continued vitality and relevance of Dong folk songs in a rapidly evolving world.

In conclusion, the exploration of the rapid change of singing technique in Dong folk songs serves as a crucial endeavor to uphold cultural legacy, foster artistic growth, deepen interdisciplinary understanding, assess community impacts, shape educational efforts, and contribute to the broader discourse on cultural preservation and diversity. Dong folk songs, deeply rooted in tradition and history, offer a poignant reflection of the cultural identity of the Dong ethnic group in China. The unique polyphonic singing style, characterized by intricate harmonies and mesmerizing melodies, showcases the skill and artistry of Dong singers.

Despite the profound cultural significance of Dong folk songs, critical research gaps persist, emphasizing the need for comprehensive documentation and preservation to safeguard this invaluable musical heritage for future generations. Understanding the physiological mechanisms, cultural transmission, emotional dimensions, and contemporary relevance of

Dong folk songs' singing technique offers insights into the dynamic nature of traditional music practices and the evolving landscape of vocal performance in this cultural tradition.

By acknowledging and studying the rapid changes in the singing technique of Dong folk songs, researchers can contribute significantly to ensuring the continued vitality and relevance of this rich cultural heritage in the face of a rapidly changing world (Yang, Shen and Jin, 2020).

1. The Dong ethnic group

The Dong ethnic group is one of the ancient and culturally diverse ethnic groups in the Chinese family. The Dong people are known for their singing abilities, and Dong villages are praised as the "homeland of poetry and the ocean of songs," with a long-standing belief that "food nourishes the body, while songs nourish the heart." Among the numerous Dong folk songs, Gaolao stands out as the most distinctive, a folk choral music tradition passed down orally from generation to generation without a conductor or accompaniment, featuring multiple vocal parts with one person leading and others harmonizing (Tan, 2024). The ancestors of the Dong people were referred to as "Qianshou" in pre-Qin Dynasty literature. It is generally believed that the Dong people evolved from a branch of the ancient Bai Yue. The Dong people are mainly engaged in agriculture, with rice cultivation being their primary focus. Rice cultivation has a long history among them, and they also engage in forestry, reaching a high level of agricultural and forestry production. In the mountainous regions of Dong communities, there are many basins locally known as bazis (Yao, 2002).

The Dong people are primarily distributed in areas such as the Qiandongnan Miao-Dong Autonomous Prefecture and Tongren Prefecture in Guizhou Province, Xinhuang Dong Autonomous County, Huitong County, Tongdao Dong Autonomous County, Zhijiang Dong Autonomous County, and Jingzhou Miao-Dong Autonomous County in Hunan Province, Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County, Longsheng Various Nationalities Autonomous County, Rongshui Miao Autonomous County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hubei Province (Yao, 2002).



Figure 1: The Dong ethnic group
Source: <http://www.ngchina.com.cn/>

The historical origins of the Dong people have been subject to differing perspectives within the field of history. There are four main viewpoints. Some believe that the Dong people are indigenous, having labored and lived on this land since ancient times, forming a community over generations. Another perspective suggests that the Dong people migrated from the downstream areas of the Duilong River, around Wuzhou, upstream to their present-day regions. This migration is referenced in migration songs among the southern dialect-speaking Dong people as "Ancestor moving upriver." A third viewpoint proposes that the Dong people migrated from the area around Wenzhou, downstream of the Yangtze River, along the Yuan River after passing through Dongting Lake. This belief is supported by legends like "Ancestor advancing into the stockade" among the northern dialect-speaking Dong people. The fourth perspective posits that the Dong people's core group is indigenous but has integrated elements from other ethnic groups that migrated to the region over the course of its long historical development (Li, 2024).

2. Dong Music

Singing holds a revered position in the daily lives of the Dong ethnic group. Elders teach songs, youngsters sing, children learn, and song masters pass down songs, creating a cultural tradition. Dong music showcases a variety of forms like grand songs, pipa songs, and roadblock songs. *Dage* (大歌) are the essence of Dong music, characterized by their polyphonic structure and unique performance style. Traditional song troupes and choirs exist within Dong communities, gaining reputation through performances of *Dage* during festivals or reciprocal visits between song groups. The choir combines lead and chorus singing, with distinct high and low voice parts, forming a complete multi-part structure that is considered one of the most exquisite folk choral traditions discovered in China, often referred to as the Sound of nature (yang, 2009).

In contrast to the structured nature of traditional ethnic singing styles, original Dong singing techniques exhibit fewer norms and embellishments in vocal skill and timbre, showcasing a natural tone quality and distinctive techniques. In terms of timbre, male voices in Dong songs are deep, female voices are clear and bright, and children's voices are tender. Such tonal qualities are greatly influenced by the Dong people's living environment, with water being a prominent feature of their habitat. Living near rivers, the flowing waters endow the Dong people with delicate and melodious characteristics, reflected in their singing voices that are especially clear and pleasant due to the nourishment from water. In terms of breathing techniques, Dong choral singers adopt the most natural methods, allowing lead singers in higher registers to showcase "florid" embellishments harmonizing with lower registers. Through mutual support and coordinated breathing patterns, Dong singers sustain prolonged vocalization, forming a "chain-like breathing, exchange of breath" singing breathing pattern. Consequently, singers' voices appear beautiful, ethereal, and enduring. Moreover, onomatopoeia is a prominent feature of Dong's original singing style. The picturesque landscapes and harmonious community provide an ideal backdrop for Dong singing, where individuals simulate various natural sounds, such as birds, insects, fish, mountain streams, etc., creating a song environment akin to nature's orchestra. Dong's essence lies in its grand songs, epitomized by the renowned "Cicada Song," a musical marvel crafted by the Dong people inspired by cicada sounds. The exquisite tones and unique singing techniques passed down through generations in Dong culture stem from both self-entertainment and a profound

reverence for natural vocal sounds, demonstrating the unceasing legacy and pursuit of song by Dong singers (Wang, 2014).

The Dong people are a musical ethnic group, and Dong songs are the songs of the nation. Before having a writing system, songs served as the history of the Dong people. Because of this, in the daily lives of the Dong people, songs are integrated into various aspects like weddings, funerals, festivals, and work. Songs act as a medium for love, a bond for marriage, decoration for festivities, a regulator for labor, and a source of solace in sorrow. In essence, songs form the spiritual backbone of their culture. Especially, the polyphonic music of Dong grand songs is harmonious, beautiful, warm, and natural, akin to a melody blending humans with nature's landscapes, leaving a lasting impression on people. Over the years, many experts and scholars have conducted in-depth research on Dong grand songs with remarkable results, yet there remains a lack of investigation from the perspective of vocal performance, which can be seen as a regrettable omission (Shi, 2018).

Dong grand songs are mostly performed as choral music, including male-female duets and mixed-gender ensembles. They can be categorized by vocal range into male grand songs, female grand songs, and children's grand songs. To adapt to stage performances, a mixed-gender choir format has been introduced. In the high vocal parts, two singers usually take turns leading, while the lower parts involve group singing, all using natural voices. Male voices are deep and steady, female voices are pure and bright, and children's voices are tender and innocent, each with its own distinct characteristics. It is a form of choral singing where one leads and the rest harmonize in high and low voice parts, belonging to the realm of folk polyphonic music. During the performance of grand songs, the lead singer first sings one or two lines, followed by the ensemble joining in, which locals refer to as "he sheng." This style includes elements of harmony and counterpoint, with bright, varied tones that are quite pleasing to the ear, making the performance distinctive in style (Shi, 2018).

1) Language Characteristics of Singing

The musical language of folk songs is extracted from the intonations of everyday language. It greatly influences the structure of music melodies, especially the color, vocalization, and singing in traditional music. The Enlightenment philosopher, musician, and thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed, "Music can not only imitate nature but more importantly imitate human language. Language is the most powerful means of expressing human thoughts and emotions. Melodies that imitate language have twice the power of affecting human emotions and minds compared to language itself. The Dong language belongs to the Zhuang-Dong branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family, specifically the Kam-Tai branch of the Dong-Shui group. It has two dialects—Northern and Southern—and the region where Dong grand songs are prevalent falls within the Southern dialect area. The Dong language is beautiful, rich in content, and can accurately express various aspects of life and history. The lyrics of Dong grand songs are a product of the Dong language; hence they are charming but pose a certain level of difficulty to learn. According to Dong experts, the lyrics of Dong grand songs not only rhyme but also require the last word of each line to match the tone (ma & Chen, 2015).

Dong language has nine tones which are strictly used, some limited to upper or lower lines, and others restricted from being used in both lines. Therefore, it is essential to understand the phonetics of the Dong language when learning to sing Dong grand songs. Dong phonetics include three types: internal rhyme, waist rhyme, and tail rhyme. Internal rhyme refers to rhyming within a sentence, waist rhyme between sentences, and tail rhyme as rhythmical

rhyme. Generally, internal and external rhymes can vary within a singing section, while tail rhymes require consistency throughout the whole section. to adapt to the linguistic characteristics of the Dong language, Dong grand songs naturally have their unique methods of performance, significantly differing from modern vocal techniques and even the concept of "mixed voice" taught in contemporary music schools. The "mixed voice" technique combines chest voice with head voice, transitioning from heavy mechanisms to light mechanisms, aiming for vocal unity and a wide vocal range through pure technical training. In contrast, Dong grand songs emphasize colloquial features, aiming to impart knowledge and culture, reflecting practical needs and thus exhibiting colloquial characteristics. When teaching Dong grand songs, instructors stress natural vocal ranges using human voices. Dong song ensembles start training and practice from an early age, beginning with repeated recitations of lyrics using chanting intonations before teaching melodies from the lower vocal parts. Their voices are round, sweet, with excellent pitch and musical sensibility. In an unaccompanied grand song, the singer hits the exact pitch upon opening their mouth, showcasing a distinct feature. This illustrates that the singing of Dong grand songs is inseparable from their ethnic language (Li, 2024).

3. The Rapid Change of Singing Technique of Dong Folk Songs

1) Rapid pitch correction in choir singing

Highly and moderately skilled choir performers were asked to adjust their singing when a perfect fifth reference was altered unexpectedly in pitch, aiming to create a major triad. Typically, the fundamental frequency (F0) curves displayed two distinct phases during these transitions: an initial swift and significant alteration followed by a slower, more subtle adjustment to fine-tune the voice F0 for the new pitch. When the vocal folds of moderately skilled singers were anesthetized, their response times were generally delayed. Response times averaged between 197–259 milliseconds, varying based on factors like the direction and magnitude of the pitch changes. The voice plays a crucial role in human communication, with pitch being a significant element that conveys emotional arousal, stress, prosody, and grammatical structure. Any deviation from the intended pitch of speech can potentially alter or distort the meaning of a spoken sentence. The passage also discusses the neural pathway involving nuclei such as the superior olive, lateral lemniscus, inferior colliculus, and others responsible for pitch control and modulation. Singers face the challenge of not only hitting and maintaining precise pitches but also quickly adjusting their intonation to match other instruments or vocalists in a group setting, a skill crucial for harmonious ensemble singing (Hood, 1969).

The mechanisms responsible for precise pitch control have been the focus of numerous studies. Wyke (1967) highlighted the importance of a combined acoustic-laryngeal reflex system. Burnett et al. (1998) explained that auditory information from the spiral ganglion in the inner ear travels through the ventral and dorsal cochlear nuclei to a group of nuclei forming the superior olive. From there, a fiber tract known as the lateral lemniscus extends to the inferior colliculus. Subsequently, the brainstem pathway projects directly from the inferior colliculus to the periaqueductal gray, and then through the nucleus retroambiguus and nucleus ambiguous to the motoneurons governing the respiratory system in the spinal cord and the laryngeal motor system in the nucleus ambiguous.

2) Breathing Techniques in Singing

The breathing techniques in ethnic vocal music have evolved from a basis of "chanting" breath control. The chanting vocal style enhances the roundness and smooth flow of sound, aligning well with Dong grand songs. The breathing method commonly used in grand songs is the most natural approach, differing from the modern singing requirement of a combined "chest and abdominal" breathing technique. Many grand songs cleverly simulate natural sounds and imitate cicadas, birds, or animal noises. With the support of the lower vocal parts, lead singers can fully express themselves, delivering extremely melodious and graceful embellishments. During singing, a prevalent form known as "branching" polyphony occurs frequently. In this technique, the primary bass note "la" is sustained for several dozen beats to provide a backdrop for the main melody. Meanwhile, 1-2 singers take turns in the upper voice parts, adding melodic support to achieve a flowing and elegant harmonic effect. Sustaining a single note for an extended period requires coordinated breathing; therefore, Dong singers utilize a linked breathing method, exchanging breaths to ensure continuous control, allowing for the song to remain gentle, ethereal, and uninterrupted for several tens of beats (Long, 2014).

3) Resonance in Singing

In Dong grand song vocal techniques, emphasis is placed on the advantage of oral resonance in singing, highlighting the forceful articulation of words and the opening of the mouth to create a warm and bright vocal tone. This not only enhances the clarity of pronunciation but also accentuates oral resonance, making it a distinctive resonance method in folk singing. Nasal resonance is a major characteristic and highlight of Dong grand song performance. Whether in male or female grand songs, nasal resonance and nasal sounds serve as unique expressive tools. The difficulty of learning to sing Dong grand songs largely lies in mastering nasal resonance and nasal sound techniques, with some suggesting that the key to singing Dong grand songs well lies in the proficient use of nasal resonance and nasal sound (Long, 2014).

Nasal resonance results in a special tonal effect that makes the voice bright, resonant, focused, and higher-pitched. Additionally, partial nasal sounds are utilized. For example, in songs like "Three Young Men Playing Flutes on the Hill" by Xijiang female grand singers and "Little Sister Married to an Outsider's Village" by Xiaohuang male grand singers, local resonance methods such as nasal resonance and nasal sounds are employed. The application of nasal resonance and nasal sound techniques gives the overall vocal tone of the choir a profound and ethereal quality, creating a unique effect. It is worth noting that nasal sounds are not consistently present throughout a song but are used occasionally during performances, applied appropriately to add variety to the overall vocal effect of the choir, resulting in shifts between bright and ethereal tones, filled with endless charm. Furthermore, the method of combining tightened lower jaws with nasal resonance is also significant. For instance, when performing the Dong female grand song "Sha Hua," which describes bees gathering nectar from flowers, singers employ a special technique that combines a tightened lower jaw with nasal resonance to vividly depict the entire process of bees flying into flower clusters, collecting pollen, and buzzing away. The unique and distinct vocal colors produced through these singing techniques make the scenes portrayed incredibly lifelike. Similarly, in the children's grand song "Little Goat," the choir vividly portrays the lively image of a young goat crossing a stream and frolicking towards the grassland by mimicking the "baa-baa-baa" calls (utilizing nasal resonance) with a jumping rhythm and cheerful melody (Shi, 2018).

4) Application of Tongue Trills in Singing

Tongue trills serve as a special singing technique in Dong grand songs, particularly prevalent in songs that aim to mimic natural sounds. As previously mentioned, the vocal performances in Dong grand songs often involve skillful imitation of natural sounds like cicadas, birdsongs, or animal noises, and tongue trills are utilized to meet this specific need. A typical example of this is the female grand song "Cicada Song." The lyrics of the song go: "I sing the cicada song, please everyone listen quietly on the side, singing the cicada song for all the villagers. Leng leng leng li, leng leng leng li, leng leng leng leng li, leng leng leng leng li, ning leng li, eh hei eh." This song describes the sounds of cicadas in the summer forest, performed by a group of 5-10 singers. By mimicking the chirping of cicadas found in nature, this performance combines elements of vocal technique and singing. Underpinned by sustained bass notes "la" from the lead singer, with a relaxed jaw and alternating breaths, the lead singer uses tongue trills to imitate the "leng leng leng li" sound of cicadas. Several singers take turns leading and alternating, creating a synchronized and harmonious effect that varies between bright and soft, producing a dynamic and immersive auditory experience that mirrors the collective chirping of cicadas in the forest. This unique and realistic portrayal makes listeners feel as though they are truly immersed in nature (Wu, 1992).

5) The singing posture is crucial.

Stand upright with equal weight on both legs for support. The position of the head is more important than that of the body. Some people tend to lift their heads when singing high notes, thinking it conserves energy, but in reality, raising the head tightens high notes. This leads to a constricted throat rather than relaxation. Correctly, the head should be slightly lowered, but not too low. The head contains numerous resonating spaces, and when the voice resonates within the head, it becomes louder. Head movements should oppose the melody; the higher the pitch, the slightly lower the head, as if guiding the sound down into the chest cavity. While singing, try to avoid using muscles unrelated to singing. When controlling breathing with the diaphragm, avoid engaging other muscles as if lifting or exerting force as you would while moving objects. This action can close off all cavities, including the voice. Sing without tension, naturally using only the diaphragm. Keep your shoulders relaxed without unnecessary movements (Wu, 1992).

Open up the throat. Opening the throat is simple—when you yawn while talking, your throat opens up. It's more critical to open up the throat than just the mouth. Singing with an open throat produces a brighter sound compared to merely opening the mouth. So, open your mouth along with your throat, ensuring the back is opened wider. It's like using an inverted funnel, with the wide end at the neck/throat area and the narrow end by the face mask. If the sound is entirely directed into the face mask, you can gradually sing from soft to strong. When singing, think of your voice like a movie—it should resonate and the focus should be centralized on the face mask. Neither too far nor too close is ideal. Each individual has their own established vocal focal point; as this focus intensifies, the sound will grow louder. A voice without focus disperses. To achieve volume, avoid presenting a facade in one day; initially, the resonance point should be small, then expand gradually as you sing louder. This method of vocalization is akin to having a mirror behind a light that allows the light to shine further. Utilize empty resonating spaces such as the forehead and nasal sinuses to the fullest (Wu, 1992).

6) Breathing

Employ the breathing technique used while lying down to sleep when singing. Between chest and abdominal (diaphragmatic) breathing, I lean more toward diaphragmatic breathing as it allows for deeper and quicker inhalation. However, it's essential not to mix both types of breathing simultaneously—it's contradictory, like pressing both the brake and gas pedals at once. While breathing, let the diaphragm expand in all directions, particularly with a firm front muscle. Always remember to breathe using the diaphragm. To improve the final high note, take a good breath, hit it swiftly, start softly, then gradually extend and amplify (Yang, 2024).

7) Fundamentals of vocalization

Firstly, the muscles in the throat should slightly lower the larynx, enhancing qualities like roundness and volume in the sound compared to when it's raised. Secondly, while singing, maintain an air column; contrary to natural speaking voice, as you ascend to higher registers, the sound becomes broader and more resonant based on this air column. Opening up the throat allows the voice to move freely without obstruction or dryness, entering the nasal cavity and resonating freely in the head. It requires breath support to achieve maximum resonance effects rather than forcing or squeezing the voice to whiten it after opening the throat. By finding the correct position, the voice naturally and correctly enters the face mask.

Vocal cords are like rubber bands—they can stretch and widen. However, if someone doesn't utilize their true vocal quality but intentionally widens the mid and low ranges, reaching high notes becomes challenging. Even if achieved, the produced sound may lack stability. Correct positioning involves determining the limits and heights of high-range sounds to ascertain the volume and location of mid and low-range sounds, rather than forcibly expanding the lower ranges upward. Start by lowering the larynx for the first note, keeping it stable for subsequent notes, gradually progressing upwards (Zhang, 2023). Relationship between opening the throat, stabilizing the larynx, and muscle tension on the sides of the larynx, Engage the muscles on both sides of the neck to assist in opening the larynx instead of constricting it. Properly opening the throat feels like the neck expanding outward. A simple method is to speak or sing with a natural yawning sensation. Another technique is to shape the mouth in a smiling position while singing. Puckering lips or pulling down the chin to create a vertical oval shape can lead to throat tightness. Resolving the passaggio issue, ensure that the mid and low-range voices are as broad as the high range for easier transitions. If the lower ranges are overly widened or pushed too forcefully, transitioning through the passaggio becomes challenging. When ascending from the lower to mid-range, envision the positioning of the high notes beforehand and sing according to this position to transition smoothly, maintaining resonance within the face mask. Sing the passaggio notes softly and smoothly without excessive force. Even when singing softly, maintain resonance in the face mask, aiming for consistent tone quality and color as when singing loudly. While singing high notes with a bright, resonant quality in the face mask, aim to achieve a similar effect for low notes but with a softer touch. Be mindful not to open your mouth too wide while singing high notes. When using diaphragmatic breathing for high notes, allow the upper abdomen to expand slightly outward. Minimize throaty sounds by smiling while singing, maintaining a supported position for each note from high to low, avoiding strain on the throat. Ascend to high notes smoothly and maintain that position while descending. Do not fear a softer voice! Many individuals tend to push their voice louder in the mid-range. Aim for a beautiful sound—keep the position high and maintain quality. Sustaining a consistent position is challenging due to the diaphragm's tendency to be lazy. Singing head

voice (HC), Keep it soft, restrained. Avoid opening your mouth too wide which can lead to airflow inefficiency; feel as if your face is turning blue with effort! Singing artistry involves mastering inhalation, taking in more air, and releasing slowly during singing. Utilize minimal air for vocal cord vibration. The key here is to keep it restrained; overdoing it can lead to constriction. When singing low notes, keep it light and simple—like striking with a small hammer. For high notes, imagine a small bell inside, especially for lyrical sopranos. Sing where you hum and focus on position rather than exerting force (Yang, 2024).

Conclusion

The significance of Dong music lies in its profound integration within the cultural fabric of the Dong ethnic group. Through the transmission of songs across generations, a rich tradition has been cultivated, exemplified by diverse musical forms such as grand songs, pipa songs, and roadblock songs. Central to Dong music are the polyphonic Dage compositions, known for their intricate structures and unique performance styles, which serve as the core of Dong musical expression. The vocal techniques employed in Dong singing reflect a deep connection to nature, with tonal qualities influenced by the surrounding environment, particularly the presence of water. Through natural breathing methods and harmonious vocalization patterns, Dong singers achieve enduring beauty in their voices, embodying the essence of their cultural heritage. Incorporating onomatopoeic elements, Dong singers skillfully mimic natural sounds, creating a sonic landscape that resonates with the rhythms of the natural world.

Dong songs function not only as artistic expressions but also as conduits for cultural preservation and storytelling. Embedded within various ceremonies and daily activities, songs play a vital role in shaping social bonds, expressing emotions, and capturing the history of the Dong people. The choral tradition of Dong grand songs, characterized by harmonious arrangements and distinctive vocal ranges, reflects a harmonious blend of human voices with the natural world, evoking a sense of unity and reverence for their surroundings. By exploring the language characteristics of Dong singing, one can appreciate the linguistic intricacies that shape the melodies and performances of Dong grand songs. Rooted in the unique phonetics of the Dong language, these songs exhibit a lyrical complexity that adds depth and richness to their musical expression. Emphasizing natural vocal ranges and traditional vocal styles, Dong singers uphold their cultural heritage through a heartfelt commitment to preserving their language and musical traditions.

The text discusses the rapid change of singing technique in Dong folk songs, focusing on two main aspects: 1) Rapid pitch correction in choir singing, 2) Breathing techniques in singing, 3) Resonance in Singing Dong grand song techniques emphasize oral resonance for warm, bright tones. Nasal resonance and sounds are key expressive tools, enhancing vocal clarity and distinctiveness. 4) Tongue Trills, Used in Dong grand songs to mimic natural sounds like cicadas, birds, or animals. Creates immersive auditory experiences, combining vocal technique with natural sound imitation. 5) Singing Posture Importance, Correct posture involves equal weight distribution, head position crucial for vocal resonance. Throat openness is vital for bright sound production. 6) Breathing Techniques, Diaphragmatic breathing essential for deeper inhalation; avoid mixing with chest breathing. Proper breath support enhances vocal quality and control. 7) Fundamentals of Vocalization, 8) Larynx management affects sound quality, maintaining air column aids resonance. Opening the throat and

stabilizing the larynx are crucial for proper vocal production. Transitioning between ranges requires technique rather than force. Proper mouth shape and muscle engagement help achieve optimal vocal results.

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