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them I. P. Kotlyarevsky***THE VOCAL STYLE “SONGS FROM
THE CHINESE” BY B. BRITTEN
IN A DIALOGUE OF CULTURAL
TRADITIONS**

Qi Mingwey. The vocal style “Songs from the Chinese” by B. Britten: in a dialogue of cultural traditions. A unique musical composition of the composer, who was a classic in English music of the 20th century, is chosen to reflect ancient Chinese poetry and Western European tradition (1957).

The aim of the paper to analyse the intonational dramaturgy of Op. 58 by B. Britten in order to draw attention to its artistic conception and point at the difficulties a performer meets when interpreting it.

The composer's thinking is characterized by a distinctive character of the mode-harmonic composing style and an objective “focus” on cognition of the world. The genre-and-style peculiarities of the musical composition are dictated not only by the uniqueness of the Chinese poetic manner, but also by the wholeness of the composer's personality, his view of life, his delicacy in interpreting a poetic word and a quick ear of an interpreter. An inspired “love duet” of a tenor and guitar (Chinese pipa) reflects mental qualities characteristic to the vocal style of the author of “Songs from the Chinese”. By means of this musical composition one can also get to know national traditions in Chinese culture.

Keywords: *B. Britten, vocal style, cultural traditions, ancient Chinese poetry, performance interpretation.*

Ці Мінвей. Вокальний стиль «Китайських пісень» Б. Бріттена: у діалозі культурних традицій.
Унікальний твір класика англійської музики ХХ ст. обрано як предмет відображення давньокитайської середньовічної поезії у західноєвропейській традиції (1957).

Мета статті — на ґрунті аналізу інтонаційної драматургії оп. 58 Б. Бріттена розкрити специфіку його художньої концепції та визначити складності виконавської інтерпретації. Мислення композитора вирізняється своєрідним ладогармонічним письмом і об'єктивним «фокусом» світобачення. Жанрово-стилістичні відмінності обумовлені не лише самотуністю давньокитайської поезії, але й органікою особистості митця, його чутливістю до втілення поетичного слова, тонким слухом інтерпретатора. Натхненний «любівний дует» тенора та гітари (китайської піпи) відбиває

ментальні риси вокального стилю автора «Китайських пісень», крізь призму яких можна познайомитися і з національними традиціями китайської культури.

Ключові слова: *Б. Бріттен, вокальний стиль, культурні традиції, давньокитайська поезія, виконавська інтерпретація.*

Ци Мінвей. Вокальний стиль «Китайських пісень» Б. Бріттена: в діалозі культурних традицій.
Унікальне сочинення класика англійської музики ХХ века избрано в качестве предмета отражения древнекитайской поэзии в западноевропейской традиции (1957).

Цель статьи — на основе анализа интонационной драматургии оп. 58 Б. Бриттена привлечь внимание к художественной концепции и указать на сложности его исполнительской интерпретации.

Мышление композитора отличается самобытностью ладогармонического письма и объективным «фокусом» постижения мира. Жанрово-стилистические особенности сочинения продиктованы не только своеобразием китайской поэтики, но и органикой личности композитора, его мироощущением, чуткостью к воплощению поэтического слова, тонким слухом интерпретатора. Вдохновенный «любивный дуэт» тенора и гитары (китайской пипы) отражает ментальные черты вокального стиля автора «Китайских песен», сквозь призму которых можно познакомиться и с национальными традициями китайской культуры.

Ключевые слова: *Б. Бриттен, вокальный стиль, культурные традиции, древнекитайская поэзия, исполнительская интерпретация.*

Problem statement. The vocal cycle “Songs from the Chinese” was composed by B. Britten in 1957 for Peter Pears (tenor) and Julian Bream (guitar). This composition makes a great example of a “meeting” of two cultural traditions, namely the *English* one (represented by B. Britten, who was at the peak of his composer's gift) and the *ancient Chinese* thinking system imprinted in poetic texts of the Tang dynasty epoch.

A dialogue of cultures as a component of the modern vocal art is of great interest as from the research point of view, so from the applied one. It serves as a material for formulating programme strategies of singing competitions, as well as for training students in solo singing at departments of music educational institutions. Since the turn of the 20th century, the chamber-vocal genre (quintessence of spiritual life of composers, poets, and performers) has been rather dependable on communication with its audience. Due to many reasons, such as transformation of music language, differences in vocalization among various singing schools, phonetic peculiarities, this genre turns to be exclusive. However, all the difficulties can easily be overcome by true connoisseurs of lyric art, for a power of singing is about the ontological connection of a man-creator to their spiritual roots of being, ethical values of the society, and its artistic life.

The author of the operas *Peter Grimes* and *Simple Symphony* addresses to Chinese medieval poetry.

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The world of “The Book of Songs” became for the composer a classic basis which helped him to comprehend Oriental mentality. Wisdom of the poetry from “the depth of centuries” enabled the character to gain optimism in his worldview. The vocal cycle’s “zest” lies in the inspired “love duet” of the guitar and the tenor.

The genre-and-style peculiarities of the musical composition are dictated not only by the uniqueness of the Chinese poetic manner, but also by the wholeness of the composer’s personality: his view of life, his delicacy in interpreting a poetic word, and a quick ear made him an inspired interpreter of the far country’s poetry.

B. Britten’s thinking is characterized by a distinctive character of the mode-harmonic composing style and an objective “focus” on cognition of the world. The latter influences the laws of the intonational dramaturgy deprived of a psychological extravagance of European Romanticism (from which a form of the vocal cycle actually originated). The sound-producing world of “Songs from the Chinese” is unique and reflects both mental qualities of the vocal style of their author and the sound-producing poetic style in Chinese tradition. Therefore, the *research is novel* as it helps to comprehend the chamber-vocal heritage of the 20th century, in particular its original British “branch”. The research will contribute to the enrichment of the repertoire of performers from China (and not only), taking into account that a young generation of singers has not been brought up on “The Book of Songs”. This music composition is not included into the repertoire of Chinese singers as it is very difficult to perform.

The aim of the research is based on the intonational analysis of the vocal cycle “Songs from the Chinese” by B. Britten Op. 58, to reveal the specifics of its artistic conception and draw attention to the original interpretation of a dialogue of cultural traditions of Europe and China.

Recent publications analysis. V. Vasina-Grossman accurately formulated the main problem in interpretation of the chamber-vocal music of the 20th century. “...Vocal genres are, in general, more “conservative”, more stable and each more or less drastic break in traditions has to overcome some opposition from singers and audience” [2, p. 273]. As an example she uses genius music of M. Mussorgsky whose vocal cycles did not become repertory even 100 years later. So, what can be said about other, “younger” phenomena whom this problem concern? In particular, as other examples of the 20th-century composers’ addressing to the lyrics of the Tang epoch, we can name music compositions by A. Webern, G. Sviridov, E. Denisov, and O. Rudiansky who are relatively unknown to the wide audience.

The nature of correlation of music with a word is a foundation stone in academic comprehension of the evolution of the vocal style in composing practice of the 20th century. Researchers state that a loss of melody and cantilena as essential communication features of “sociability” of music are pity contradictions and losses

in the chamber-vocal genre in the contemporary times. V. Vasina-Grossman believes that “the Golden Age” came to its end within J. Brahms’ chamber-vocal creativity [2, p. 274]. Another observation of the music expert points at the communicative role of the addressee (audience). She notes that democratism of the musical speech or its “being encoded” significantly influence the vocal genre’s “being performed” [ibid.].

Core material. As it is commonly known, B. Britten composed most of his vocal works for the tenor Peter Pears who was a keen musician known for his performing F. Schubert’s songs. The character of the composition is a poet, who by analogy with Romanticism culture was unappreciated by the society, but generously gifted, with a delicate psyche. A guitar serves as a basis for imitation of the Chinese stringed instrument called *pipa* and gives an elegance of Oriental flavour. Unordinary expression of music by B. Britten lies in transparency and a fastidious nature of the general texture phonation of the **vocal** in the aura of the **guitar instrumentalism**. The timbre solution (tenor and quasi-pipa) are in tune with the composer’s vision on the archaic character of life in far China and intactness as a condition for happiness, a wonderful and unattainable ideal, a dream of a better world.

Let us analyse the “Songs from the Chinese” in order to characterize B. Britten’s vocal style. The artistic union of six miniatures with programme titles represents an album compiled of exterior impressions and pictures from a traveller’s life which are not united into the whole storyline. There is an exception though: “Depression” (#5) “drops out” of the dramaturgic “canvas” – it clearly relates to the outer plane and exposes an autobiographical theme of the popular in the 20th century reflection.

“The Big Chariot” opens the vocal cycle. It is an allegory of the medieval concepts about a man’s destiny. The image of the chariot is created by means of sequestering of a short theme of an active nature for the principal performer, as well as by means of characteristic rhythmical figures from four sixteenths note values which frequently vary in different voices and registers in the instrumental part.

The initial theme **a** (first phrase) in the part canto is based on the melodies with a descending motion (with the basis of tonality F from a tonic fifth to a third), then a skip follows up to a clear forth (to VI scale degree). It sounds vividly and independently, starting with a soft off-beat in nuance *f*, and communicates an optimistic view of life. In the guitar theme one’s ear can clearly distinguish two planes. The upper plane: parallel fifths revoice the principle performer’s melody in an emphatically articulatory way; the lower plane: a phonic “emblem” of the chariot: a rhythmic figure of sixteenths note values which goes up and down, up and down. The role of the leit-tonation of tritone (augmented fourth) is worth noting as well. It intensifies “metall” of the Chariot’s voice. Starting in F-dur with the Mixodian scale degree, canto will “catch up” the

figure of the chariot in the second theme ϵ (t.8-9), but in the Lydian mode D.

Fermata separates the first theme of the exposition from the second one – ϵ . Development of two themes ($\mathbf{a} + \mathbf{b}$) can be considered as independent periods (AB) which is a two-part no-repeat form. However, the author tends to believe that Chinese prosody is characterized by small structures connected according to the contrast by semantic relations. The exposition is built in the same way: \mathbf{a} – an image of the chariot, ϵ - reaction of the man.

A “shift” to a new pitch is marked with the *piano* nuance (tenderness of a human heart). In terms of its rhythmic structure, the theme obtains stability: it sounds on a stressed beat prolonged by means of syncope. The figure of the chariot is varied in timbre and rhythm: high, kind of “dry” tessitura, mirror-like rearrangements (inversion and retrograde) refresh the image of a motion, a way.

Thus, the exposition of the first miniature is organized as an interrupted period of two phrases with a no-repeat form ($\mathbf{a} + \mathbf{b}$) and an asymmetrical structure (7 + 6). In the guitar part a bi-functional stop on a dominant, simultaneously with turning to the minor mode by means of echo, makes the vocal theme sound sad with a minor third (*as* instead of *a*). The exposition also contains a major-thirds correlation of tonalities: if the Chariot sounds with the Mixolydian mode F, the man sounds with the light Lydian D and finishes his answer to the Chariot in an unsteady-questioning way. Generally, asymmetry is characteristic to Chinese prosody tradition. It got reflected in the musical syntax and laws of time (absence of regular accents in the vocal part and permanent avoiding of a beat-rhythmic unity between the parts, dominance of a complimentary nature).

The second chapter (t.14) with the same music material ($\mathbf{a}^1 + \mathbf{b}^1$) has a function of the development (motus). It involves a sequence and returning of a vivid *marcato* sonority (by analogy with the first development), with even a stronger vigor and even strain. A terrace-like ascent on the chord-combination *g-moll* and Mixolydian *Es* cadences into *A-dur* (t.19). In the guitarist's part a dissonance background occurs: due to the Mixodian melody *des-c-des-es-f* at the background of a third *cis* in *A-dur* tonality!

Continuation of the theme ϵ (tt.21-26) involves a fascinating effect of the “second friction” (t.22: *cis* – *canto* and *des* – in the upper voice of the guitar accompaniment as the echo of “the rotating wheel” at the background of a quiet happy singing). This effect is also caused by the combination of two tonalities in the guitar layer (*Fis* in bass and *Ges* – above). An extravagant tone game includes an enharmonic substitute (in t.22 *Fis* – *Ges*, with resolution in *G*: t.25), creating the ground for “visible” allegories, unexpected surprises and inevitable turns of the Chariot!

Returning of the theme \mathbf{a} (*E-dur*) in the climax diapason *ff* points at a dynamic repetition (t.27). The keywords “the big chariot” are accented with the high-

est tessitura (g^2 -*fis*²) and a descending motion resembling laughter. The stylistic repetition is marked with a new image-semantic feature:

- the first theme sounds twice, though being transformed ($\mathbf{a}^2 + \mathbf{a}^3$) with a refusal from material ϵ ; an allegory of a stopped wheel;
- a mode fluctuation (a game of a “gleaming” third *a-as*);
- a rhythmic fragmentation of theme \mathbf{a} with the “break-down” on an ascending fourth and a recognizable Doryan intonation.

Unexpectedly, the Mixodian tone es^2 “takes” the melos “away” down the Phrygian scale (a hint at the semantic figure of death) to a keynote *f*. And the motion ceases... And only guitar “white horses” singing from sixteenths – semantic symbol of the Chariot's motion – try to escape from the acquired Phrygian austerity to the wide open space of a sunny *F-dur* (t.42). As if it were a little cloud, a tritonic “trace” gets melted in a natural scale of a three-line octave. And only amazement remains (“... what was it?”).

The second miniature “The Old Lute” (lyrics by Bai Juyi) is kind of a “side part”. It contrasts feminine-soft dreams about happiness to a masculine-energy theme of “The Big Chariot”. It is interesting to mention, that this miniature begins with an instrumental introduction of the guitar (imitating playing the lute). The recollection is slowly “hovering” in a mat airy haze to the strains of the old lute.

The structure in the principle performer's theme is of a square nature which is typical for instrumental music. However, a slow beat and an extravagant rhythmic structure draw a veil over the function of discontinuity. As for the form, these are variations on a basso ostinato (“a form as a process”, according to B. Asafiev). Meanwhile, a clearly heard simple two-part form turns to be a “crystal” (“a form of the second place”, according to V. Prototopov's theory): $\mathbf{a} + \mathbf{a}^1 \text{ — } \mathbf{b} + \mathbf{a}^2$ (with a coda on a new material).

There are several distinctive features of the guitar style of “The Old Lute”. Firstly, it is a number of segments of musical themes “knitted together” into a poetic sonority of a static image-monolith: dissonant keynotes of a harmonic vertical (ninth and sevenths). Secondly, it is a complementary rhythm and polyrhythm with a freely varied beat-rhythmic picture within large note values, where “beating” of small sixteenths and triplets is breathing. Thirdly, it is an organ point on tones *e-fis* (basso ostinato). The upper layer in the thematic structure of the guitar is developing according to the soprano-ostinato principle with elements of variation, and creates, in such a way, an aura of the irreal living in the drowse.

A melody of the principle performer is marked with the author's remark “*always and parlando*”. With notes of the scale *H-dur* written at the keynote, a canto part embraces ambitus of the scale *E-dur*: it goes up to the sounds of a basic tonic triad, affecting an ascending fourth *ais-dis* and smoothly going down on a descend-

ing gamut. One's ear does not understand in the beginning that it is not the Aeolian, the Lydian major scale, due to the fact that a melos sphere of this poetic miniature is so unusual (from the point of view of the European tone system); it dazzles with its sound plain-air and the oriental magic of its rhythmic-timbre dialogues.

Repetition (α^2) contains an image transformation: unexpectedly a canto loses the guitar support (an interrupted ostinato). The closure of a descending gamus sounds lonely in a final cadence of the guitar theme; the tenor echoes it freely hovering (remark *ad libitum*) and ceases on a fifth G-dur which breaks the law of the tone repetition.

A small coda makes the composition *open* (and once again a third contrast of tonalities: E – G). In the motion of triplets (indication of a quick temp Quick), where each eighth is a round dance of thirty-second notes (a quarter = 104), the breakup of “the old” gets approved (through a new dimension – keynote G and its dominant D) in a high tessitura, which is very important. The illusion of being captured by the antiquity is shattered (the Lydian mode is a sign of antiquity), bringing a mystical consciousness back to the reality. An unwanted association with “Songs of Kursk” by G. Sviridov comes to mind, where the composer used a Lydian fourth which he picked up in old melodies and used as a distinctive feature of Russian folklore-ritual antiquity. The verbal text can explain the onomatopoeia in a coda; however, even without it, the timbre-sonoristic complex brilliantly illustrates the effect of escape from the statics. As if the flecks of sunlight drove the melancholy out, with their twinkling they have woken a night dream up and resurrected the character to comprehend the Truth. Live “here and now!”

“**The Autumn Wind**” is the third romance in the cycle by B. Britten. It is rather concise thanks to a very quick tempo and a large time measuring unit, namely the whole bar (with a time signature 2/4). The theme of the wind is presented in the toccata-motor stylistics, untypical for vocal music but convenient and usual for an instrumentalist. Depicting of the boisterous wind enables us to compare its function in the whole cycle with a sonata development.

The main theme canto (t.1-12) is a monolithic period of two phrases (5 + 5) at the background of a guitar ostinato. It consolidates the vision about the general presence of E-dur thanks to the notes written in the clef and the organ point from “The Old Lute”. Further on, the mode sphere gets more complicated: a Lydian fourth emerges in the exposition, then – an ascending major pentachord appears on a low II scale degree (t.9-10) which coincides with the initial theme of “the Chariot” in tonality F-dur.

Developing with a new thematic material, chapter **B** is marked with the unstable replicas of voice with characteristic syncopations (alike to the “torn” gusts of wind). This chapter is repeated twice (tt.13-18). It finishes with the intrusion of a D-dur “splash” of wind in the guitar part, which is also consolidated in the tenor's

part with a song phrase (on a dominant of a new tonality). Another stage of the development: from t.25 till the beginning of a dominant organ point (tt.38-43) on a fifth of the basic tonality, where D-dur piece sounds again – a climax of the whole zone of the development.

“A quiet repetition” (in the dynamics *pp*) in the vocal melodies is marked with the prevalence of the Lydian motifs which cease in the keynote through a “descent” to the Phrygian scale degree, making the turbulent flow even gloomier. Tinkling seconds in the guitar timbre *ais-h* is a sign of the Lydian mode in a new semantic function. It presents the nature's foreignness which invites the man's death.

“**The Herd-Boy**” is a new stage in the image development of the dramaturgy of the cycle. An image of a boy-cattle driver brings calm and peace. For the first time the composer has used the elegiac tonality *g-moll* which dominates for some time in the introduction (2 bars) contrasting to a dance theme. The principle performer begins his song (the author's remark Rhythmik) in an accurate rhythm with the guitar fandango-like accompaniment (time signature 6/8). The monolith of singing and dancing expressively conquers new and new peaks: for the first time it is tone e^2 marked with the longest time value and a precise cadence. The sound *fis^2* closes the first phrase. After some wandering in flat cross-fades (*c-moll* – *f-moll*), one can hear an ascending Lydian mode (a quotation from the theme of the “chariot”), and, finally, a fourth skip with its peak as a climax of this vocal miniature (g^2). The miniature ends with a thematic arch – a theme of introduction in an abundant melodic version, summarizing in such a way a new quality of the development in the repetition. Generally, “The Herd-Boy” can be considered as a genre scene, a breathing period (*intermezzo*) between two bordering states of a man's heart, namely between a fight and melancholy.

The text by Bai Juyi called “**Depression**” (#5) which narrates about the hardship of loneliness was chosen by B. Britten for the tragic centre of his “Chinese saga”. In terms of emotions, the theme canto drastically differs from the previous sound-images in the vocal cycle. However, in terms of its stylistics, it is derived from the leit-complex of “the Chariot”. Second and fourth moves in the counter-movement in a very slow tempo with a dotted rhythm on a stressed beat (the analogy with the theme by C. Debussy “Steps on the snow”, Prelude for piano, cycle 24) depict the character's painful reflection. Polyphony and parallel moves appear in the guitar instrumentalism capturing harsh false relations (“figures of fear”); open fifths, parallel fourths, and bunches of seconds psychologically model depression as an image of a soul's deprivation. A free recitation to music can hardly be fixated in a form-creative process which is, alike to a free improvisation, gets spontaneously unfolded beneath our eyes due to the confession of the unhappy character. The performer has to feel and grasp the breath of the character's “inner speech”, a suffocating feeling of a loss of joy.

A syncopated “figure of speech” increases the effect of stumbling, a soul’s being tired. In terms of intervals, a second and a fourth are leading here. In contrast to an inviting fourth in the exposition of the cycle, here it has a descending motion which accounts for its relation with the genre of crying (lamentation in the Ukrainian version). In the course of development, tonality is not accented; most likely the composer deliberately used the serial structure. Sorrow reaches its low limit: a long sound on a tone *f* is associated with a desperate screaming. In the guitar part, bunches of sixths imitate moaning (the upper voice emphasizes the lamento line – a symbol of sorrow, lamentation over the mundane vale). The character overcomes depression in the final of the cycle which is called “**Dance Song**”.

The leit-intonation of the final vocal image is an ascending fourth again. It sounds joyfully and inviting. Its complicated beat-rhythmic frame with 7/8 constantly varies the accents, creating in such a way the effect of an archaic holiday. A step-like rhythm of the guitar echoes the principle performer and creates its own unified beat-rhythm and texture picture. The tonality E-dur is twinkling with other-scale touches inside of its “mode field” (the Mixolydian scale degree, twice repeated moves to an increased eighth with chromatic “laces” in the guitar part). It brings about the association with returning of the Chariot, for intonational “beginnings and ends” demonstrate so many common features.

The second realisation of the theme has a function of the rhapsodic development to the highest point of hovering of the dancing spirit with the following thawing, to be more precise, the slowdown of the motion (repetition). Descending phrases to tenth *fis*², chromatic figures in a quick tempo are difficult to intone. The formula 2 + 2 + 3 interchanges with another scheme of accents: 3 + 2 + 3, then: 2 + 3 + 2. A tone *g*² becomes a pitch accent.

The final song is the most difficult to perform. It requires a singer to apply the highest strain of his physical and mental strength and a perfect technical command of his vocal tract, especially on high dwelt notes in a high register. A complicated harmonic style of the instrumental accompaniment, along with a very quick tempo, makes it difficult to perform the vocal cycle for an ensemble as well. The semantic image of the final brings the semantics of the dramaturgy of the whole cycle back to its source (#1), closing the symbolism of the circle.

The analysis of the artistic conception of “Songs from the Chinese” has just half-opened a great abundance of the English composer’s melodic thinking, as well as his remarkable talent to interpret a poetic word. However, the research results are sufficient to make conclusions which will help performers of the English-style chamber song.

Conclusions. 1) The vocal style of “Songs from the Chinese” by B. Britten has no analogy in the Western European tradition. It is not alike to any genre-style model formed in the 18th-19th centuries. The compo-

sition has nothing romantic in its musical stylistics. Neither it involves an imitation of folklore prototypes, though B. Britten was a great master in that. His musical adaptation of folk melodies of different countries, such as English “The Miller of Dee”, Irish “The Salli Gardens”, Scottish “O can ye sew cushions”, and French “Spinner”, “Eho! Eho!” [1] make a brilliant example of the composer’s mastery.

“Songs from the Chinese” are difficult to perform because of the duet vocal style, namely singing accompanied by the guitar which often has a complex tone and mode system. On the other hand, its “silvery” timbre creates an intimate, unusually soft colour, and its texture-thematic richness accounts for the stereophonic effect. The general style of the melos in the singer’s part is declamation-improvisational. A spirit of an objective narration with elements of a psychological “barrier” resembles the ballade style. The vocal style of the “Chinese” cycle by B. Britten does not involve a narrative rhetoric or pure melodiousness. Instead, a wonderful melo-declamation, sincerity, understanding of a poetic word-image, and a synthesis of the vocal and instrumental principles are brought to a splendid performance life by the composer. In this way a **brilliant blending of the vocal intonation in the instrumental sound interior** comes to life.

2) The vocal intonation in B. Britten’s composition is of an original nature thanks to the poetic style in classical art of ancient China where the composer found much in common with his own world perception. Firstly, it is an image of a Poet and his spiritual way from sorrow to wisdom, repose from scenes of nature, love to life as a basic source of joy for a man. Let us note the principles of the composer’s thinking as they represent a positive experience of a “meeting” of Chinese and European traditions:

- laconism of narration and syntax asymmetry in compositional chapters of a vocal miniature;
- combination of clarity, visible solidity with an open associativity and polysemy of sound images;
- abundance of a rhythm realized in a number of beat-rhythmic and tempo gradations of musical time which has its own measurement, pulsation, and characteristic thematical visibility;
- having a dance rhythmic structure as a basis (e.g. “The Big Chariot” and final “Dance Song”) which accounts for the genre features in the symbolism of allegoric meanings;
- preference for modal modes (the Lydian, the Mixolydian, and the Phrygian ones) in the context of polytonality;
- connection of two (or more) mode spheres, separately set in terms of tone in both the instrumental and vocal parts.

The mode harmony with an unusual timbre-texture duet narration, along with an extravagant tempo-rhythm and rhythmic structure, deprived of a regular accentuation, creates a **conditional image of the Orient**, a spirit of intactness, freedom from European civi-

lization. It is difficult for a young singer to interpret “Songs from the Chinese” by B. Britten due to its vocal-technical characteristics, as well as due to its genre-style solution chosen by the composer when working on a creative synthesis of cultural traditions which go beyond the European canon.

3) Based on the thesis that a vocal style drastically differs depending on the addressee, the author comes to conclusion that the dramaturgy of the vocal style “Songs from the Chinese” has a communicative component. It is composed for the singer-intellectual and intended for the audience capable of comprehending which needs a mediator between the mundane and the celestial, seeks a meeting, and trusts the singer as a poet, “follows him” into the “divine” spheres of the spiritual world.

The highest art of the English composer embraces an organic combination of simplicity and clarity of a musical speech aimed at the realisation of a poetic structure of ancient poetry which involves an elegant spirit of Chinese culture, its genre-acute and exquisitely soft tincture. The essence of these unpretentious, at first sight, sayings (which are rarely philosophical) involves a beauty of intonations delighting one’s ear and contemplation of this beauty. As a result, the audience feel as if they visited a far country and enjoy *what they hear as if they saw it!* It has to do with a visible visualization of the intonational picturesque: a musical semantics is comprehensible even with no translation of libretto. Hence, it is responsibility of the performer-singer to vividly perform an intoned word.

The character of the instrumental accompaniment makes performing difficult for a vocalist: the guitar does not accompany, it *lives its own life*, and a singer’s word-image cannot be perceived beyond this life; moreover, the image can even lose its meaning. Therefore, a singer must possess a highest ensemble culture and an absolute pitch (rhythmical and mode-tone) in order to join a duet parity. It is important to remember that this music was composed for top rank musicians (J. Bream and P. Pears) who became the inventors of the “etalon” performing style of “Songs from the Chinese”.

Another problem is a sense of musical time and agogics designed in the musical text by the composer: **the aura of singing as an unaffected improvisation** can dye away beyond these conditions. The latter note is especially important for realization of the beat-rhythmical freedom, characteristic to B. Britten’s composing, and an absolute disinhibition where time is not tied to a bar-line and freely, like a bird, listens to its own heart, and catches its reaction to a word being sung.

Thus, “Songs from the Chinese” Op. 53 by B. Britten (1957) make a precious contribution to the spiritual reflection of European 20th-century musical self-awareness suggested by a poetic heritage of the ancient Orient. Chinese images of the world created by B. Britten are equally beautiful to the ones in the original. In a complicated picture of cultural interactions and intercrossing of different vocal traditions of Europe, Chinese poetry becomes “Ariadne’s thread” for entering a mental world of the Orient. Stylization of Chinese tincture occurs in the intonational-image structure by means of modelling of generally accepted in the “cultural dictionary” symbols and archetypes of Chinese national tradition. Among them there are timbres of instruments (pipa, flute, the percussions), poetic images of forces of nature (water, wind, mountains, the moon) in whose mirror the image of a man himself and his values in his philosophical-religious thinking are reflected. Unification of different elements of a musical speech into a new synthesis enabled B. Britten to achieve his own way to interpret “a cultural code” of Chinese culture, and have an *intentional* anticipation of its spiritual relation with European 20th-century self-awareness. This is the hermeneutic “key” to the comprehension of the vocal style of “Songs from the Chinese” for a modern singer-interpreter.

Further research perspectives. After “Songs from the Chinese” the composer will write another composition for high voice and guitar, namely a vocal cycle “*Folk Songs*” (1961). It is necessary to continue studying of the chamber-vocal lyrics of the 20th century in English musical tradition, including B. Britten’s operas which can be comprehended by students in higher music educational institutions of China and Ukraine in terms of their artistic and technical peculiarities.

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