

The Dialectics of Singing: An Analysis of Six Techniques for Crafting a Beautiful Voice through Balance and Interdependence

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ABSTRACT

"Singing is an artistic and melodic language art. It is the expression of speech and emotion through flowing breath and dancing melodies." This is the natural law of singing. Materialist dialectics holds that all movement phenomena contain objective and traceable laws and techniques. The same applies to singing—only by following and utilizing this objective law can one master singing skills. This paper takes "Balance and Interdependence" (the core connotation of The Dialectics of Singing) as the natural law of vocal production and the core principle of singing. It identifies six basic techniques for crafting a beautiful voice: "Breath as the foundation, forward placement as the key, concentration as the lifeblood, resonance as the treasure, emotion as the sublimation, and individuality as the style." Employing research methods such as "integration of narration and discussion, positive-negative comparison, and hierarchical progression," the paper conducts an in-depth exploration of the aforementioned natural law, core principle, and six techniques, thereby profoundly revealing the philosophical connotations underlying the natural law of vocal production and the six singing techniques. The author aims to articulate personal viewpoints, insights, and propositions on vocal performance skills and teaching experience within his professional domain, providing a comprehensive theoretical and practical summary of singing and teaching. This work condenses a lifetime of learning into written form for sharing with peers in the field.

Keywords: *Dialectics of Singing, Balance and interdependence, Crafting a beautiful voice, Six core techniques, Technical analysis.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Singing derives from the emotional expression in human speech, and speech is the material basis for singing. While speech itself lacks distinct pitch proportions, it is always intertwined with the spirit of emotions and the fluctuations of moods, granting it the basic rhythms of light and heavy, slow and fast, restrained and rising, pausing and proceeding. These are the foundational tones of singing and its original form of expression.

With 35 years of experience in vocal performance and teaching, the author intends to make a generalized summary of this journey, expound on personal perspectives and claims accumulated in the process, and share performance

skills and teaching outcomes with colleagues in the field for mutual discussion and learning. It is hoped that this work will serve as a useful reference for the cause of Chinese vocal performance and education.

2. INTERPRETATION OF THE THESIS CONNOTATION

2.1 *Balance and Interdependence (Core of The Dialectics of Singing)*

There exists a dialectical relationship between "balance" and "interdependence"—characterized by mutual reliance, coordination, counterbalancing, and transformation. Specifically, the first "key point" in this relationship refers to the balance point

where sound, breath support, and resistance interact, located in the dantian area. The second "key point" is the highest apex of the vocal resonance position, situated in the nasal sinuses. The third "key point" is the articulation point for pronunciation, involving the lips, teeth, tongue, and larynx.

The "interdependent whole" refers to the coverage of the opening degree of the vocal resonance cavities (i.e., the coverage of syllable opening and closing during vocalization) as well as the force-bearing area of the resistance between breath and sound. In the process of vocal production, the "key points" and "interdependent whole" form a unified contradictory entity, functioning as an integrated system of mutual interaction and transformation—an essential manifestation of The Dialectics of Singing.

2.2 Balance: A Fundamental Dimension of The Dialectics of Singing

"Balance" (a core component of The Dialectics of Singing) refers to the appropriate grasp of vocal production—specifically, the balance of vocal force and the range of articulatory opening/closing, the balance of timbre brightness, the balance of emotional expression and stage performance, and the balance of dynamic leverage, collectively termed the "dialectical logic of singing."

Specifically, "balance" encompasses the appropriate opening/closing degrees of mouth shapes for articulation, enunciation, and rhyme convergence; the balanced intensity of vocal force; the appropriate volume of resonance; the balanced contrast between bright and dark timbre; the proper control of emotion and stage performance; and the appropriate grasp of personal style. In a word, it is the so-called "moderate opening and closing, and free control of release and restraint."

"Balance" further refers to the counterbalancing equilibrium between the movement directions of breath and sound; the sense of balance between key points and the interdependent whole; the balance points between emotion and sound as well as between emotion and breath; the balance of elements such as volume and force; and the balance of supporting fulcrums during articulation, enunciation, and rhyme convergence—all of which are integral to The Dialectics of Singing.

3. THE CONSTRUCTION OF SIX CORE TECHNIQUES FOR CRAFTING A BEAUTIFUL VOICE (CORE CONTENT OF THE DIALECTICS OF SINGING)

The first technique is deep, stable, uniform, coherent, restrained, and orderly breath like flowing water, which constructs an inexhaustible "fuel" system for power—namely, the first of the six techniques: "Breath as the foundation."

The second is to firmly anchor the articulation point on the focus between the lips and teeth, and suspend the resonance focus on the vault between the hard palate and upper teeth as well as the nasal vestibule, so as to fully achieve the goal of forward vocal placement—i.e., the second technique: "Forward placement as the key."

The third is to produce sound that converges and reflects into a point like a concave lens, realizing concentrated and unified linear propagation—thus forming the third technique: "Concentration as the lifeblood."

The fourth is that only when the voice generates a resonance effect through constructing a rounded and concentrated space can it form rich overtones, possessing both strength and loudness, along with a bright timbre and strong penetration, which constitutes a sound "treasure" with sufficient energy—this is the fourth technique: "Resonance as the treasure."

The fifth is that singing integrated with corresponding emotions can move people's hearts, arouse their feelings, and be thought-provoking, thereby elevating the work to the highest realm—representing the fifth technique: "Emotion as the sublimation."

The sixth is that singing infused with distinct personalized characteristics such as the performer's own style, the composer's intentions, the work's historical background, and regional features can form a unique style and highlight individual charm—this is the sixth technique: "Individuality as the style."

3.1 Breath as the Foundation

3.1.1 The Relationship Between Breath, Sound, and Music

The notion that "breath is the foundation" embodies the "balance and interdependence"

dimension of The Dialectics of Singing. The human voice is a product of breath vibrating the vocal cords; thus, vocal music can be defined as an artistic form of human voice shaped by breath movement. All wind instruments also produce sound through the variations in the intensity of breath movement—specifically, the quantitative changes and dynamic fluctuations of breath within the instrument's tubing. Wind in nature is likewise a result of air current movement, and whistle music is generated by the varying intensity of breath. These four types of music or sounds all originate from the action of breath, thereby revealing the natural phenomenon that breath serves as the driving force or actuating power behind sound.

3.1.2 The Lever Principle of "Breath as the Foundation"

The concept of "Breath as the Foundation" falls within the scope of "balance and interdependence" (a core of The Dialectics of Singing) in the vocal power system. Here, the "key point" is embodied in the fact that the optimal point for controlling breath movement during singing lies in the dantian area, which is an objective manifestation of the scientific application of the lever principle of labor saving (the "interdependent whole" refers to the force-bearing area and length range when using breath).

Archimedes invented the law of lever equilibrium, stating, "Give me a fulcrum, and I will move the earth." This statement contains the law of labor saving through levers, which he rigorously demonstrated logically using geometry. The law indicates that the longer the power arm and the shorter the resistance arm, the more labor can be saved; conversely, it becomes very laborious. The fulcrum of singing breath has shifted downward from the traditional chest and lower abdomen to the dantian area, thereby significantly increasing the length of the lever's power arm and shortening the resistance arm. Therefore, this constitutes the scientific application of the lever principle in singing, making singing the most labor-saving. It profoundly reveals the philosophical connotation underlying the concept of "Breath as the Foundation" within The Dialectics of Singing.

3.1.3 The Connotative Significance of "Breath as the Foundation"

Breath is analogous to the roots of a luxuriant tree—all the supply of nutrients and water comes from the absorption of the roots, and more

importantly, it relies entirely on the roots to maintain stability and balance, remaining unshaken despite wind and rain. Breath is like the blood of the human body, like water with a constant source, like the fuel for a mechanical engine, like dew and rain, and like the sun. As the saying goes, "All things grow by the sun; dew and rain moisten the seedlings to thrive..."

Therefore, singing is the art of utilizing breath. Establishing a solid foundation of breath is the fundamental construction project for crafting a beautiful voice (a core goal of The Dialectics of Singing), similar to laying the cornerstone of a towering building. A firm foundation enables greater resistance to the impact of storms, earthquakes, and tsunamis—this principle is comparable to the basic standing posture training in martial arts: a stable stance ensures the effectiveness of fists. Such is the profound philosophical connotation of "Breath as the Foundation" within The Dialectics of Singing.

3.1.4 Practical Training Methods

Wrap a belt around your dantian. When breathing in, let your dantian, chest, and abdomen—your whole "air box"—expand naturally. When breathing out, only the muscle in your dantian (about the size of your palm) should snap back inward quickly (don't hold the contraction; stop right after the quick pull). Right after that, expand outward to both sides of the dantian to feel the opposing support. This way, you can blow out your breath evenly, in an orderly and smooth manner, like a steady trickle of water. One practice piece is attached. Keep practicing, and remember to pull the corners of your mouth inward, making your mouth as round as possible to avoid air escaping. ("Figure 1")

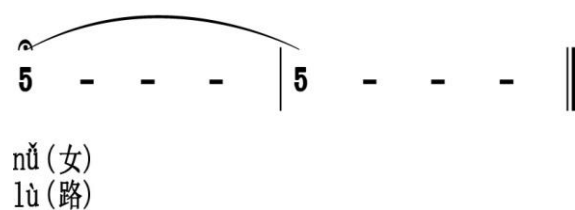


Figure 1 Vocalization Drill 1.

3.2 Forward Placement as the Key

3.2.1 The Connotative Significance of Forward Placement as the Key

This concept falls within the scope of "balance and interdependence" in The Dialectics of Singing. The ultimate goal of singing is to be heard and appreciated by the audience. Sound serves as the material carrier for expressing music, thus becoming the prerequisite material foundation acting on the auditory sense. Traditional singing often took place in acoustic concert halls without modern sound equipment, even in open squares or outdoor settings; therefore, sound projection technology has become an important research focus in singing. However, singing can only remain enduringly appealing when using the original human voice as the transmission carrier, as it can express natural and simple human emotions.

In fact, singing is directly projected from the front of the singer's mouth, and sound mainly propagates in a straight line. After the breath vibrates the vocal cords to produce the fundamental tone, it is quickly transferred to the hard palate to achieve the shift of resonance position, thereby realizing forward placement. This is the basic method of forward placement singing—an essential technique for crafting a beautiful voice in The Dialectics of Singing. The following examples sufficiently illustrate the singing concept of forward vocal production.

3.2.2 Illustrative Examples

Example 1: The renowned singer Jiang Dawei stated, "Singing is speaking on notes; sing on the basis of speaking, and sing only after speaking well." This implicitly reveals the singing philosophy of concentrated forward placement—consistent with the "balance and interdependence" logic of The Dialectics of Singing.

Example 2: The author summarizes the singing philosophy as follows: "Narrate on flowing note melodies, sigh on fluttering note melodies, and call out loudly on surging note melodies. The low register is whispering love words privately, the middle register is expressing heartfelt feelings calmly, and the high register is shouting passionately with intense emotions." Therefore, forward vocal production has become a core technical method for crafting a beautiful voice in The Dialectics of Singing.

The advantages of forward vocal production include a clear, bright, concentrated, powerful, and flexible voice, with low air consumption and less effort required. It also achieves a high vocal position, facilitates the establishment of a reliable vocal fulcrum, enhances intonation accuracy, ensures coherent and natural expression, and enables flexible voice transition—all of which contribute to the "balance" dimension of The Dialectics of Singing.

3.2.3 Construction Methods

The technique of forward vocal production can be acquired through practice with the following syllables. Focus on practicing closed vowels and semi-open vowels with initial consonants such as m, z, q, x, c, s, b, and n, including examples like: mī, me, mei, mō, mu, zī, zu, zhi, ju, qī, qu, cī, sī, bē, pī, wō, dī, nā, nī, nēi, kǔ, etc. A vocalization exercise is attached. ("Figure 2")

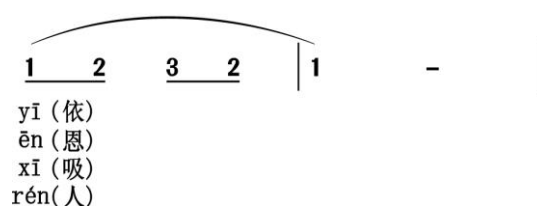


Figure 2 Vocalization Drill 2.

3.3 Concentration as the Lifeblood

3.3.1 The Connotative Significance of Concentration as the Lifeblood

This concept belongs to the category of "balance and interdependence" in The Dialectics of Singing. The concentration of singing voice is as crucial as the lifeblood—an indispensable condition for crafting a beautiful voice. Only when the voice is concentrated into a single point and a straight line can the singing become beautiful and touching. Similar to the unity and cohesion of a country or a nation, only by uniting around a central core can a country and its people be sustained, and only by uniting as one can great power be generated. An unconcentrated voice will become dull, weak, scattered, vague, and ineffective—lacking color, luster, and penetration, which violates the "balance" principle of The Dialectics of Singing.

3.3.2 Illustrative Examples

The spout of a water kettle is always designed to be long and pointed to ensure that water flows in a concentrated stream (a single point and line), allowing it to pour smoothly, accurately, and centrally into a teacup without any spillage. The philosophical thought of "Dripping water hollows out stone" illustrates that by maintaining a concentrated point and line and acting persistently on this central focus, even soft water can penetrate extremely hard stone. This reveals the natural law of the immense power of concentration and perseverance—aligning with the "interdependence" logic of The Dialectics of Singing.

Over 2,300 years ago, to repel the Roman invasion, Archimedes assembled multiple bronze mirrors into a large light-concentrating concave lens. By focusing sunlight into a point and line, he generated enormous thermal energy that ignited the masts and sails of Roman warships. The Roman fleet, engulfed in flames, was routed and fled without engaging in battle.

Laser, known as "the brightest light," is a queue of photons induced (excited) to emit light. Each photon in the queue shares the same optical properties and moves in unison. Figuratively speaking, all photons in a laser "pool their efforts," emitting consistently in one direction to form a concentrated point and line, thus possessing unparalleled power and invincibility.

The focal length of a flashlight head can be adjusted arbitrarily: the smaller the beam, the more concentrated the light and the longer its range; conversely, a wider beam results in a shorter range. This similarly demonstrates the importance of a concentrated point and line—consistent with the "balance" principle of The Dialectics of Singing.

The Ukrainian tenor Oleh Hrechko stated, "Sing forward and concentrated on the teeth; do not grin sideways to prevent sound and breath from leaking below the corners of the mouth." He also proposed the theory of "360-degree circular resonance around the lips." The author interprets this theory as follows: it embodies advanced academic foresight, opening up new horizons for vocal resonance mechanisms. In essence, it is the scientific application of the technical principles of playing the trumpet, offering advantages such as agility, forward placement, reduced effort, vocal conservation, and minimized vocal strain—all of which serve the goal of crafting a beautiful voice in The Dialectics of Singing.[1]

The aforementioned examples reveal that concentrating the singing voice into a point and line is the lifeblood of vocal production—an essential technique in The Dialectics of Singing. Only a concentrated voice possesses penetration and impact, featuring a bright, clear, textural, and vivid timbre that carries far. In contrast, a scattered, unconcentrated voice loses its supporting fulcrum, becoming hollow, lifeless, weak, and even dull and hoarse—failing to meet the requirements of crafting a beautiful voice.

3.4 Resonance as the Treasure

3.4.1 Connotative Significance

This concept falls within the category of "balance and interdependence" in The Dialectics of Singing. After all, the amplitude, frequency, and volume of the human voice are extremely limited. To enhance its volume and power (key to crafting a beautiful voice), besides increasing airflow pressure and using vibrato techniques, the most effective method is to utilize the functional effects of resonance for improvement.

Ancient Roman architecture was characterized by semicircular arches, domes, and cross-vaulted structures, which provided a scientific basis and physical reference for acoustics, laying the material foundation for vocal resonance. Its churches, theaters, and other buildings were constructed in circular shapes, allowing speech to achieve excellent resonance effects. This acoustic principle indicates that circular or domed spaces are most conducive to sound resonance—they can not only expand volume and loudness but also beautify sound timbre, increase overtone density, make the sound concentrated, bright, solid, and powerful, enhance propagation effects, and create a rich and diverse "resonance treasure" for the voice. Hence, resonance is regarded as the treasure of sound for crafting a beautiful voice.

Therefore, fully exploring, utilizing, and constructing resonance cavities in singing to achieve full vocal resonance has become another major foundational project in singing (a core task of The Dialectics of Singing). Through repeated practice, the author has fully proven that transmitting the fundamental sound waves produced by the vibration of the vocal cords via uniform and orderly breath to the small hard palate sphere at the front of the nasal and oral cavities, as well as achieving resonance through the 360-degree circular area around the lips, can yield unexpected

resonance effects. This is closely connected and collaboratively unified with the aforementioned concepts of "forward placement as the key" and "concentration as the lifeblood"—all of which are integral to The Dialectics of Singing.[2]

3.5 Emotion as the Sublimation

3.5.1 The Connotative Significance of Emotion as the Sublimation

"Emotion as the sublimation" means that emotion serves as the carrier for the sublimation of singing—falling within the "balance" category of The Dialectics of Singing. Emotional awareness is like the soul of singing. Emotion is spiritual in nature. Objective laws reveal that singing first requires a beautiful vocal material foundation as the expressive carrier—this is merely the material basis. If one intends to make the voice melodious and emotionally moving (a core goal of crafting a beautiful voice), it is necessary to achieve a gradual spiritual sublimation, that is, to use emotion as the vocal carrier to elevate the singing to a realm of artistic conception, endowing the voice with a shining soul.

This refers to what we usually call the four major human emotional expressions: joy, anger, sorrow, and delight. Singing is inherently a means and act aimed at expressing people's various emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, and delight. Only when the singing is endowed with such emotional colors can it move the audience and arouse their feelings—realizing the "emotional balance" in The Dialectics of Singing.[3]

3.5.2 Exemplification

Yan Weiwen said: The voice should have ups and downs and contrasts to be pleasant to hear. Don't sing too "openly", learn to control, which is conducive to the emotion beautifying the voice and making the singing melodious. This not only exquisitely expounds the relationship between "balance" (a core of The Dialectics of Singing) and the interdependent relationship between "key points" and "whole" in singing, but also illustrates the contrast relationship between emotions and the ups and downs of music. More importantly, it reveals the philosophical thought that emotion is the sublimation of singing—consistent with the connotation of The Dialectics of Singing.

Carreras once said: "One must put expression on the notes and show all the colors in the song."

His "colors" refer to the emotions of music. Only such beautiful, shining and emotional singing can make the audience intoxicated—achieving the goal of crafting a beautiful voice in The Dialectics of Singing.

The singer Peng Liyuan said: "One should sing out the soul of the song...", which reveals various emotions hidden in the ideological connotation of the song. The key word "soul" is the "emotion" of singing—an essential element of The Dialectics of Singing.

Henry Ferdinand Manshstein said: "Emotion is the soul of singing. Only when the voice and emotion are equally perfect can singing be called art." She compares the emotion of singing to the soul and regards emotion and voice as the inalienable core components of the art of singing—reflecting the "balance between material (voice) and spirit (emotion)" in The Dialectics of Singing.

Hambol said: "Sing with your heart." Here, "heart" refers to thoughts and true feelings, implying that one should sing with emotion. It profoundly reveals the dialectical relationship between the voice and emotion in singing: the voice is the material basis of singing, and emotion is the spiritual sublimation of singing—this exactly coincides with the author's philosophical thought of "emotion is sublimation" in The Dialectics of Singing.[4]

3.5.3 Construction Methods

It is necessary to practice vocalization with a chanting tone and emotion, endowing the vocalization exercises with the performer's emotions and spirit. Enable vocal works to reflect the original emotional intentions of the lyricists and composers, and capture the thematic image of the musical image shaping in the works, such as the implication of the writing background, timeliness, and regionality—all of which are practical ways to realize "emotion as the sublimation" in The Dialectics of Singing.

3.6 Individuality as the Style

This concept falls within the "balance" category of The Dialectics of Singing. It refers to the unique personal characteristics of a singer, such as vocal volume, timbre, voice quality, range width, lyricism, and vocal expressiveness. It also includes the performer's understanding of the artistic conception created by the lyricist and composer, the thematic

image of the work, the contemporary theme, and the regional characteristics.

Here, the author intends to emphasize that "style is the condensed embodiment of individuality, and individuality is the distinctive manifestation of style." Singing needs to follow one's own personal characteristics and take a unique path—avoiding the state of "thousands of people with the same face and the same voice," which violates the "diversity balance" in *The Dialectics of Singing*. Instead, one should choose suitable singing techniques, vocal works, and performance styles based on their own characteristics, and express and convey musical ideas and unique emotions in their own way. Only by fully highlighting one's individuality can the emotional connotation of music be elevated to the highest realm, endowing the singing with the true essence of emotion and the spiritual vitality of a soul—ultimately achieving the goal of crafting a beautiful voice.

4. CONCLUSION

Singing requires skills and follows predictable laws. Vocal techniques entail adhering to the natural principles of voice production, integrating appropriate inner emotions and personal characteristics, and achieving free and flexible expression in singing. Based on this vocal principle and the author's experience in performance and teaching, this paper summarizes the natural laws of vocal production and core vocal skills as "Balance and Interdependence"—the core connotation of *The Dialectics of Singing*, which constitutes the core of vocal technique and the central idea of this paper.

The specific content of this core is the "six techniques for crafting a beautiful voice" elaborated in detail above: "Breath as the foundation, forward placement as the key, concentration as the lifeblood, resonance as the treasure, emotion as the sublimation, and individuality as the style."

Employing research methods such as "integration of narration and discussion, positive-negative comparison, and hierarchical succession," this paper conducts an in-depth exploration of the aforementioned natural laws of vocal production, core vocal skills (embedded in *The Dialectics of Singing*), and the construction of the six techniques, thereby profoundly revealing their philosophical connotations. It attempts to clarify the author's viewpoints and propositions on vocal performance skills and teaching experience, aiming to provide a comprehensive summary that integrates theory and

practice for vocal performance and teaching (serving the promotion of *The Dialectics of Singing*). This paper distills the author's lifelong learning into written form, intended to be shared with peers in the industry.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

First author Lishan Xie guided the research, outlining the theoretical basis and designing the empirical study at Guangzhou College of Commerce. He used rigorous methods to collect and analyze data. Findings were synthesized and presented in the paper. Second author Songlin Zhou contributed to data collection and processing. She also conducted a supplementary empirical study at Chengdu Technological University.

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