

## Vocal Techniques and Musical Literacy in the Singing of Chinese Gu Shi Ci Art Songs

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: May 17, 2024

Accepted: July 25, 2024

Published: July 31, 2024

Volume: 12 Issue: 3

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

### ABSTRACT

Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs are a genre that combines ancient Chinese poetry with music, reflecting profound emotional depth and cultural ethos. The primary objective is to investigate the integration of vocal techniques and musical literacy in the performance of Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs. The study conducted at Nanchang University and the China Conservatory of Music involved interviews and observations with five key informants: professors, vocal coaches, professional singers, music educators, and opera performers. Data analysis included transcribing interviews, coding for recurring themes, and cross-referencing observational data. The findings reveal that precise vocal techniques, such as breath control and tone modulation, and a deep understanding of the poems' contexts significantly enhance performance authenticity and emotional resonance. The study underscores the need for an integrated curriculum in music education that combines technical skills with cultural and literary education. It suggests incorporating historical context modules, technical workshops, interdisciplinary approaches, performance analysis, and practical opportunities to foster a comprehensive understanding of Gu Shi Ci art songs. This approach can deepen students' appreciation and ensure the rich cultural heritage of these songs continues to resonate with contemporary audiences.

**Key words:** Gu Shi Ci Art Songs, Vocal Techniques, Musical Literacy, Chinese Poetry, Music Education

### INTRODUCTION

Chinese Gu Shi Ci, a collection of ancient Chinese poetry, holds an esteemed place in the annals of Chinese literary and musical heritage. These art songs, characterized by their profound emotional depth and intricate linguistic beauty, have been cherished for centuries, reflecting various historical periods' cultural and philosophical ethos (Brindley, 2016; Li, 2021). Integrating Gu Shi Ci poetry with music has created a unique genre of art songs that not only preserve the literary essence of ancient Chinese poetry but also bring it to life through the expressive power of music. This study explores the crucial role of vocal techniques and musical literacy in performing and interpreting these art songs, shedding light on how these elements enhance the overall artistic expression and cultural significance of the genre (Andrijauskas, 2016; Cui & Chen, 2023; Xie & Punvaratorn, 2024).

The primary problem this research addresses is balancing technical vocal proficiency with a deep understanding of cultural and historical contexts in the performance of Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs. While the technical aspects of singing, such as breath control, pitch accuracy, and tone modulation, are essential for a polished performance, they alone cannot convey these ancient poems' rich emotional and cultural layers (Mabry, 2002; Tang & Sornyai, 2023). Performers must

also possess a nuanced appreciation of the songs' historical, philosophical, and literary contexts to deliver an interpretation that resonates with contemporary audiences while staying true to the original essence of the poetry. This dual requirement poses a significant challenge for singers and educators, as it necessitates a holistic approach to vocal training that encompasses technical skills and musical literacy (Howard, 2016; Chapman & Morris, 2021).

The objective of this study is to investigate the integration of vocal techniques and musical literacy in the performance of Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs. By examining various singing methods and their effectiveness in conveying these art songs' emotional and cultural nuances, this study seeks to identify best practices and pedagogical strategies to help singers achieve a more authentic and impactful performance (Ilari et al., 2013; Hao & Yodwised, 2024; Li & Choatchamrat, 2024). This investigation will involve analyzing specific examples of Gu Shi Ci art songs, such as "Guan Ju," "The Great River Goes East," "Silent Night Thoughts," and "Seven Steps Poems," to illustrate the interplay between vocal techniques and musical literacy in bringing these ancient works to life.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to bridge the gap between technical vocal training and cultural education in Chinese art song performance. By highlighting

the importance of musical literacy in the interpretation of Gu Shi Ci art songs, this study aims to foster a comprehensive approach to vocal pedagogy that not only equips singers with the necessary technical skills but also instills in them a deep appreciation for the cultural and historical contexts of their repertoire (Long et al., 2024; Pengzhen & Punvaratorn, 2024). This holistic approach can ultimately lead to more meaningful and resonant performances, preserving the rich heritage of Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs and ensuring their continued relevance in contemporary musical practice. Furthermore, this research can contribute to the broader discourse on integrating cultural education in music training, offering valuable insights for educators, performers, and scholars interested in the intersections of music, literature, and cultural heritage.

### Research Question

- How do vocal techniques and musical literacy contribute to effectively performing and interpreting Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The performance of Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs demands a synthesis of vocal techniques and musical literacy. This approach not only preserves the integrity of the original works but also enhances their relevance and resonance in contemporary musical practice. Through this study, we aim to provide insights and strategies to help singers and educators achieve this integration, ultimately fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs.

### The Development of Chinese Gu Shi Ci and Art Songs

Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs have evolved over centuries, originating from ancient poetry collections like the “Book of Songs” and “Three Hundred Poems of the Tang Dynasty.” These songs have been an essential medium for preserving and transmitting Chinese cultural and literary traditions. Combining poetry and music in Gu Shi Ci art songs represents a unique fusion of literary and musical art forms, reflecting ancient China’s aesthetic values and cultural philosophies. This genre has been shaped by various historical periods, each contributing to its rich tapestry of themes, styles, and musical characteristics. The development of these art songs also mirrors the broader evolution of Chinese music, incorporating elements of traditional folk music, court music, and, later, influences from Western music (Everett & Lau, 2004; Gladston, 2014).

### Vocal Techniques in the Performance of Gu Shi Ci Art Songs

Effective performance of Gu Shi Ci art songs requires mastery of specific vocal techniques that enhance the expressive potential of the singer. Essential techniques include breath control, pitch accuracy, tone modulation, and dynamic expression. Breath control is crucial for sustaining long phrases

and delivering smooth, connected lines, while pitch accuracy ensures the melody is rendered precisely. Tone modulation involves varying the color and quality of the voice to match the emotional content of the lyrics, and dynamic expression requires the singer to adjust the volume and intensity of the voice to convey different levels of emotion. These vocal techniques are essential for capturing the intricate nuances of Gu Shi Ci art songs, allowing the performer to convey the deep emotional and philosophical meanings embedded in the poetry (Chang, 2011; Lian, 2022; Wang & Chonpairot, 2024).

### The Role of Musical Literacy in Singing Gu Shi Ci Art Songs

Musical literacy is indispensable for interpreting and performing Gu Shi Ci art songs with authenticity and depth. Understanding the poems’ historical, philosophical, and literary contexts is essential for capturing their true essence. This includes knowledge of the cultural and social milieu in which the poems were written and familiarity with the themes and motifs commonly explored in ancient Chinese literature, such as nature, love, loss, and the human condition. Musical literacy also involves appreciating the symbolic and allegorical language often used in Gu Shi Ci’s poetry, which requires the singer to engage with the text more deeply. By integrating musical literacy into their performance, singers can bring a greater sense of authenticity and emotional resonance to their interpretations of Gu Shi Ci art songs (Zixuan, 2021; Yeye, 2023; Zhang, 2023).

### Integrating Vocal Techniques and Musical Literacy in Performance

Integrating vocal techniques and musical literacy is essential for achieving a compelling and authentic Gu Shi Ci art song performance. This holistic approach requires singers to combine their technical vocal skills with a deep understanding of the cultural and literary contexts of the poems. For example, when performing “Guan Ju,” a singer must not only master the vocal techniques needed to convey the song’s melodic and rhythmic intricacies but also understand the cultural significance of the poem’s themes of love and longing. Similarly, in “The Great River Goes East,” the performer must balance technical precision with an appreciation of the historical and philosophical context of the poem. This integration allows singers to deliver technically proficient performances rich in cultural and emotional depth, enhancing the overall impact of Gu Shi Ci’s art songs (Fung, 2017; Fan & Chuangprakhon, 2024; Gao, 2024).

## METHOD

### Selection of the Informants

To gain a comprehensive understanding of vocal techniques and cultural literacy integration in Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs, selecting key informants with extensive knowledge and experience in vocal performance and Chinese cultural traditions is crucial. Five key informants were chosen,

including professors, vocal coaches, and professional singers who specialize in Chinese art songs and have a deep understanding of the cultural and historical context of Gu Shi Ci. Their insights and expertise provide valuable perspectives on the effective performance and interpretation of these art songs, as shown in Table 1.

**Selection of the Research Site**

The research sites are conducted at Nanchang University and the China Conservatory of Music. These institutions are chosen for their distinguished status in music education and their emphasis on traditional Chinese music and culture. Nanchang University, known for its comprehensive music program, offers a rich environment for studying vocal techniques. The China Conservatory of Music, focusing on Chinese musical traditions, provides an ideal setting for examining the integration of musical literacy in music performance, as shown in Table 2.

**Research Tools**

This study employs interview and observation forms as the primary tools for data collection. The interview form is designed to gather in-depth qualitative data from key informants, while the observation form is used to record and analyze performance practices systematically. The following table outlines the research tools and the specific steps involved in their application, as shown in Table 3.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis for this study involves meticulously examining the qualitative data obtained from both the interview and observation forms. Initially, the recorded interviews are transcribed, ensuring that all verbal and non-verbal cues are accurately captured. The transcriptions are then systematically

**Table 1.** Selection of the informants

Role	Expertise
Professor	Engaged in teaching and researching vocal opera performance and stage art theory, recognized for contributions to Chinese vocal music education
Vocal Coach	Specializes in vocal techniques and emotional expression, with experience performing and teaching Chinese art songs
Professional Singer	Renowned for stage performances and expertise in Chinese folk and classical singing techniques, focusing on integrating cultural elements into performances
Music Educator	Focuses on national vocal music, with extensive experience teaching and interpreting ancient Chinese poetry and art songs, emphasizing musical literacy
Opera Performer	Recognized for contributions to Chinese opera and vocal music, with expertise in combining traditional vocal techniques and cultural narratives in performances

coded to identify recurring themes and patterns related to vocal techniques and musical literacy. Simultaneously, the observation data are scrutinized to extract detailed information on performance practices, focusing on the nuances of vocal execution and the integration of cultural elements. The data from the interviews and observations are then cross-referenced to validate the findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of how vocal techniques and musical literacy contribute to the effective performance and interpretation of Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs. This integrative approach ensures the analysis is thorough, contextually grounded, and reflects the intricate interplay between musical skills and cultural knowledge in these performances.

**RESULTS**

The research findings reveal several key themes essential to effectively performing and interpreting Chinese Gu Shi Ci

**Table 2.** Selection of the research site

Institution	Location	Relevance to Research
Nanchang University	Nanchang, Jiangxi	It offers a comprehensive music program, providing a rich environment for studying vocal techniques.
China Conservatory of Music	Beijing	It focuses on Chinese musical traditions, which is ideal for examining the integration of musical literacy in performance.

**Table 3.** Research tools and steps

Research Tool	Steps to Use
Interview Form	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a semi-structured interview form with open-ended questions about vocal techniques and musical literacy.</li> <li>2. Pre-test the interview form to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness.</li> <li>3. Schedule and conduct interviews with selected key informants.</li> <li>4. Record interviews and take detailed notes.</li> <li>5. Transcribe interviews for analysis.</li> <li>6. Analyze transcriptions to identify key themes and insights.</li> </ol>
Observation Form	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design an observation form to systematically record performance practices, including vocal techniques and cultural elements.</li> <li>2. Pre-test the observation form in a pilot study to ensure it captures relevant data effectively.</li> <li>3. Observe performances of Gu Shi Ci art songs in various settings.</li> <li>4. Use the observation form to record observations during performances systematically.</li> <li>5. Compile and analyze observational data to identify patterns and variations in performance practices.</li> <li>6. Integrate observational findings with interview data for a comprehensive analysis.</li> </ol>

art songs. The data highlights the critical role of precise vocal techniques, including sound control, breath management, and emotional expression, in delivering authentic renditions of these art songs. Additionally, musical literacy emerged as a vital component, with performers needing a deep understanding of the historical, literary, and philosophical contexts embedded in the poetry. Integrating these vocal techniques and musical literacy enables singers to convey the profound emotions and intricate artistic nuances of Gu Shi Ci art songs, resulting in performances that resonate deeply with audiences and preserve the rich cultural heritage of these traditional works.

### **Vocal Techniques in Gu Shi Ci Art Songs**

#### ***Analysis of vocal control and modulation***

The vocal control and modulation in Gu Shi Ci art songs are foundational elements that significantly influence performance effectiveness. Singers must master precise pitch control and modulation to maintain the melody's integrity and the lyrics' expressive depth. In the context of Gu Shi Ci, the subtle shifts in pitch and the nuanced changes in vocal dynamics are crucial in conveying the intricate emotions and storytelling embedded within the poetry. This requires a deep understanding of the emotional landscape of the poems and the ability to reflect these emotions through vocal modulation, thus creating a seamless blend between the text and the musical interpretation.

#### ***Role of breath control and tone variation***

Breath control is another critical aspect of singing Gu Shi Ci art songs, as it directly impacts the singer's ability to sustain notes, manage phrasing, and deliver emotional expression. Effective breath management allows singers to maintain a steady and controlled vocal tone, essential for the lyrical and melodic lines typical of these art songs. Tone variation, on the other hand, involves adjusting the vocal timbre to match the emotional and thematic content of the song. This could mean using a softer, more delicate tone to convey melancholy or a brighter, more resonant tone to express joy and exaltation. Together, breath control and tone variation enable singers to navigate the complex emotional terrain of Gu Shi Ci art songs, enhancing the listener's experience and deepening the connection to the poetry.

#### ***Techniques for expanding the vocal range and achieving resonance***

Expanding the vocal range and achieving resonance are vital techniques for singers of Gu Shi Ci art songs. These techniques allow performers to cover the wide melodic intervals and dynamic contrasts that characterize these compositions. Expanding the vocal range involves rigorous vocal exercises, stretching, and strengthening the vocal cords, enabling singers to reach higher and lower notes quickly and clearly. Achieving resonance, meanwhile, involves utilizing the natural cavities of the body, such as the chest, throat, and head,

to amplify and enrich the sound. This enhances the volume and adds fullness and warmth to the voice, making the performance more impactful. Seamlessly integrating these techniques ensures that singers can deliver powerful, emotive performances that honor the artistic and cultural heritage of Gu Shi Ci art songs.

In conclusion, the adequate performance of Gu Shi Ci art songs relies heavily on advanced vocal techniques, including precise vocal control and modulation, adept breath management and tone variation, and the capability to expand the vocal range and achieve resonance. These techniques are essential for bringing out the songs' full emotional and artistic depth, allowing singers to convey the profound beauty and cultural richness of Chinese Gu Shi Ci poetry through their performances.

### **Musical Literacy and Its Impact on Performance**

#### ***Understanding the cultural and historical context of gu shi ci***

Musical literacy, particularly an understanding of the cultural and historical context of Gu Shi Ci, is paramount in performing these art songs effectively. Gu Shi Ci, meaning "ancient poetry," encompasses a rich tapestry of Chinese history, traditions, and values. Each poem and its corresponding song are deeply embedded with historical references, philosophical ideas, and cultural nuances that have evolved over centuries. Performers who grasp this context can deliver a more authentic and meaningful interpretation. This understanding informs their vocal delivery, helping them to emphasize specific phrases or words that carry significant cultural weight. It also enables them to connect more deeply with the material, transforming their performance from a mere vocal exercise to a profound cultural expression.

#### ***Importance of literary comprehension in song interpretation***

Literary comprehension plays a crucial role in interpreting Gu Shi Ci's art songs. These poems are often characterized by their dense literary allusions, metaphors, and symbolic language. Singers must delve into the literary intricacies of each poem to fully appreciate its themes, emotions, and underlying messages. A thorough comprehension of the text allows performers to bring out the subtle layers of meaning in the poetry. For instance, understanding the historical significance of certain events or the cultural connotations of specific images can guide the singer's vocal interpretation, ensuring that each line is delivered with the appropriate emotional weight and clarity. This literary insight is essential for conveying the depth and complexity of Gu Shi Ci, making the performance resonate more deeply with the audience.

#### ***Expressing cultural themes and emotions through vocal performance***

Expressing cultural themes and emotions through vocal performance is where the integration of vocal techniques and musical literacy truly shines. Gu Shi Ci's art songs often

explore love, nature, patriotism, and existential reflections, all steeped in Chinese cultural heritage. Singers must channel their understanding of these themes into their vocal delivery, using their voice to paint vivid emotional landscapes. This involves technical proficiency and a deep emotional connection to the material. By aligning their vocal expression with the cultural and emotional undercurrents of the poetry, singers can evoke the intended responses from their audience, whether it be nostalgia, melancholy, joy, or reverence. This expressive capability elevates a performance from technically skilled to genuinely moving and memorable.

In conclusion, musical literacy significantly impacts the performance of Gu Shi Ci art songs. Understanding the cultural and historical context, possessing literary comprehension, and expressing cultural themes and emotions through vocal performance are all crucial components. These elements allow singers to deliver performances that are not only technically proficient but also rich in cultural meaning and emotional depth. By integrating these aspects into their practice, performers can honor the heritage of Gu Shi Ci art songs and offer audiences an experience that is both artistically and culturally enriching.

### **Integration of Vocal Techniques and Musical Literacy**

#### ***Case studies of specific performances (e.g., “Guan Ju”)***

To illustrate the integration of vocal techniques and musical literacy, we analyzed several performances, with “Guan Ju” as a primary case study. “Guan Ju,” derived from the ancient poetry collection “Shi Jing” (The Book of Songs), is a quintessential example of how a deep understanding of cultural and historical context can enhance a vocal performance. In performances of “Guan Ju,” singers who demonstrated a nuanced grasp of the poem’s historical significance and cultural themes could convey the poem’s layered emotions more effectively. They employed vocal techniques such as breath control and modulation to emphasize the tender and longing emotions inherent in the poem, creating a performance that resonated deeply with audiences familiar with its cultural background.

#### ***Detailed examples of how musical literacy enhances vocal techniques***

Musical literacy significantly enhances vocal techniques by informing the performer’s approach to tone, phrasing, and emotional expression. For example, in the song “Guan Ju,” understanding the poem’s depiction of a gentleman’s admiration for a virtuous lady influences how a singer might use breath control to convey a sense of yearning and respect. Singers with musical literacy might elongate certain vowels or use softer dynamics to reflect the poem’s gentle and contemplative nature. Additionally, knowledge of traditional Chinese musical aesthetics, such as using pentatonic scales and specific ornamentations, enables singers to authentically incorporate these elements into their performance, bridging the gap between the ancient poetic form and modern musical interpretation.

### ***Observations of emotional expression and audience reception***

Observations of various performances indicated that integrating vocal techniques and musical literacy profoundly impacts emotional expression and audience reception. Performers with technical proficiency and a deep understanding of the cultural context could deliver more emotionally compelling performances. For instance, in performances of “The Great River Goes East,” singers who understood the historical and emotional depth of the poem conveyed a powerful sense of nostalgia and heroism, reflected in their vocal intensity and dynamic range. Audiences responded more positively to these performances, often expressing a deeper emotional connection and appreciation for the cultural heritage. This suggests that musical literacy enhances the singer’s expressive capabilities and fosters a richer and more engaging experience for the audience.

In conclusion, integrating vocal techniques and musical literacy is essential for effectively performing and interpreting Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs. Case studies of performances like “Guan Ju” demonstrate how cultural understanding can inform and enhance vocal delivery, leading to more authentic and impactful interpretations. Detailed examples reveal that musical literacy influences various aspects of vocal technique, from breath control to tonal quality. Observations of emotional expression and audience reception underscore the importance of this integration, highlighting its role in creating performances that resonate deeply with both the performer and the audience. Through this integration, singers can honor the rich cultural heritage of Gu Shi Ci art songs while delivering technically proficient and emotionally compelling performances.

### **Implications for Music Education**

#### ***Insights on teaching vocal techniques and musical literacy***

The integration of vocal techniques and musical literacy in the performance of Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs provides several valuable insights for music education. Teaching vocal techniques should not be isolated from the cultural context of the repertoire. Instead, educators should emphasize the symbiotic relationship between technical proficiency and cultural understanding. For instance, when teaching breath control and modulation, educators can highlight how these techniques help convey the emotional nuances of the poetry. By incorporating lessons on the historical and cultural background of Gu Shi Ci, educators can provide students with a deeper appreciation for the material they are performing. This holistic approach ensures that students are technically adept and culturally informed, enabling them to deliver more compelling and authentic performances.

#### ***Suggestions for curriculum development in music education***

Music education curricula should include technical and cultural components to foster the integration of vocal techniques and musical literacy. A suggested curriculum framework could include:

1. **Historical Context Modules:** Classes that explore the historical and cultural backgrounds of Gu Shi Ci, including its literary significance and its place in Chinese cultural heritage.
2. **Technical Skills Workshops:** Practical sessions focused on developing essential vocal techniques such as breath control, tone modulation, and range expansion, with specific applications to Gu Shi Ci art songs.
3. **Interdisciplinary Approaches:** Collaborative projects integrating music education with other disciplines, such as literature and history, help students see the connections between their vocal practices and broader cultural narratives.
4. **Performance Analysis:** In critical listening and analysis sessions, students study exemplary performances of Gu Shi Ci art songs, identifying how vocal techniques and musical literacy are applied effectively.
5. **Practical Performance Opportunities:** Regular performance sessions where students can practice and demonstrate their understanding of the technical and cultural aspects of Gu Shi Ci art songs.

### ***Potential for enhancing students' appreciation of gu shi ci art songs***

Integrating vocal techniques and musical literacy into music education has the potential to significantly enhance students' appreciation of Gu Shi Ci art songs. By understanding the cultural and historical significance of these songs, students can develop a deeper connection to the material. This connection not only enriches their performance but also fosters a greater appreciation for the cultural heritage of Gu Shi Ci. As students become more informed about the context in which these art songs were created and performed, they can approach their practice with a heightened sense of purpose and respect for the tradition. Moreover, this comprehensive educational approach encourages students to engage more critically and creatively with their musical studies, leading to more thoughtful and inspired performances.

In conclusion, integrating vocal techniques and musical literacy in music education significantly benefits teaching and learning Gu Shi Ci art songs. This research highlights the importance of a holistic approach to vocal training that includes cultural education. Suggestions for curriculum development emphasize the need for a balanced inclusion of technical skills and cultural knowledge, ensuring students are well-equipped to perform and interpret Gu Shi Ci art songs authentically. Ultimately, this integrated approach has the potential to deepen students' appreciation for these art songs, enriching their educational experience and fostering a lasting connection to Chinese cultural heritage.

### **Challenges and Strategies in Performing Gu Shi Ci Art Songs**

#### ***Common difficulties faced by performers***

Performing Gu Shi Ci art songs presents a unique set of challenges for vocalists. One of the primary difficulties is

mastering the intricate vocal techniques required for these pieces, which often involve complex breath control, precise modulation, and a wide vocal range. Additionally, performers must navigate the nuanced emotional landscape of the songs, conveying the deep cultural and historical context embedded within the lyrics. Another significant challenge is harmonizing traditional Chinese musical elements with the vocal performance, particularly when accompanied by traditional instruments like the guqin or flute. Finally, understanding and accurately expressing the literary and philosophical themes of the poetry requires a high level of musical literacy, which can be difficult for performers who may not have extensive backgrounds in Chinese literature and history.

#### ***Effective strategies for overcoming these challenges***

To address these challenges, performers can adopt several effective strategies. Firstly, rigorous vocal training focusing on breath control, tone variation, and range expansion is essential. Techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing exercises and vocal warm-ups tailored to the specific demands of Gu Shi Ci art songs can help singers develop the necessary technical skills. Additionally, immersive learning experiences, such as workshops and masterclasses with Chinese traditional music and literature experts, can enhance performers' musical literacy and deepen their understanding of the material. Engaging with interdisciplinary studies that combine music and literary analysis can also be beneficial. This approach allows performers to gain insights into the historical and cultural significance of the poetry, fostering a more nuanced interpretation of the songs. Collaborating with musicians skilled in traditional Chinese instruments can help singers achieve a more cohesive and authentic performance. Furthermore, listening to and analyzing exemplary performances of Gu Shi Ci's art songs can provide valuable models for vocalists to emulate and learn from.

#### ***Recommendations for training and development***

For comprehensive training and development in performing Gu Shi Ci art songs, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Integrated Curriculum:** Develop an integrated curriculum that combines vocal technique training with cultural and literary education. This curriculum should include modules on Chinese history, philosophy, and literature to provide performers with a solid foundation in the cultural context of Gu Shi Ci.
2. **Specialized Workshops and Masterclasses:** Organize workshops and masterclasses led by experts in traditional Chinese music and vocal techniques. These sessions can offer targeted guidance and practical tips for mastering the specific demands of Gu Shi Ci art songs.
3. **Collaborative Projects:** Encourage collaborative projects between vocalists and musicians proficient in traditional Chinese instruments. These collaborations can help singers develop a better sense of timing, phrasing, and emotional expression in conjunction with instrumental accompaniment.

4. **Performance Opportunities:** Provide regular performance opportunities in both formal and informal settings. Performing in front of an audience can help vocalists refine their techniques, build confidence, and receive constructive feedback.
5. **Access to Resources:** Ensure that performers have access to a wide range of resources, including recordings of exemplary performances, scholarly articles on Gu Shi Ci, and historical texts. These resources can serve as reference points and inspire more profound engagement with the material.
6. **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship programs pairing experienced performers with emerging vocalists. Mentors can offer personalized advice, share insights from their experiences, and help mentees navigate the challenges of performing Gu Shi Ci art songs.

In conclusion, performing Gu Shi Ci art songs requires a blend of technical prowess and musical literacy. By adopting targeted strategies and comprehensive training programs, performers can overcome the common challenges associated with these pieces. Integrating vocal technique training with cultural education, fostering collaborations, and providing ample performance opportunities are key to developing skilled and culturally informed vocalists capable of compelling interpretations of Gu Shi Ci art songs.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The integration of vocal techniques and musical literacy in the performance of Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs presents both challenges and opportunities for singers and educators. This study reveals that while technical proficiency is crucial, conveying these songs' profound emotional and cultural layers is insufficient. The findings underscore the importance of combining vocal techniques with a deep understanding of Gu Shi Ci's poetry's cultural, historical, and philosophical contexts, aligning with previous research by Howard (2016) and Chapman and Morris (2021).

The study's findings are consistent with theoretical principles in vocal pedagogy and ethnomusicology. The emphasis on breath control, pitch accuracy, tone modulation, and dynamic expression aligns with Mabry's (2002) framework for vocal performance. Additionally, the importance of musical literacy in performance is supported by Andrijauskas (2016), who highlights the role of cultural context in interpreting traditional art forms. The integration of these elements is also consistent with the holistic approach advocated by Ilari et al. (2013) and Hao & Yodwised (2024), who emphasize the need for a comprehensive understanding of both technical and cultural aspects in music education. This dual focus allows performers to deliver more authentic and impactful interpretations, enhancing both the educational experience and the quality of performances.

Despite the alignment with existing theories, the study also highlights several inconsistencies and challenges. One significant challenge is achieving a balanced integration of technical skills and musical literacy. While vocal techniques can be taught through structured exercises and

practices, musical literacy requires a more immersive and interdisciplinary approach, as Fung (2017) and Gao (2024) noted. Another inconsistency arises from the varied cultural and historical knowledge levels among performers. As observed in the performances of "Guan Ju" and "The Great River Goes East," singers with a deeper understanding of the poems' contexts could deliver more resonant performances. This suggests a gap in the current training programs, which may not adequately emphasize cultural education alongside technical training.

The findings have significant implications for music education. The study suggests the need for an integrated curriculum that combines vocal technique training with cultural and literary education. This approach, supported by recommendations from Fan & Chuangprakhon (2024) and Long et al. (2024), can help bridge the gap between technical proficiency and cultural understanding. Educators can create a more holistic learning environment by incorporating historical context modules, technical skills workshops, interdisciplinary approaches, performance analysis, and practical performance opportunities. This integrated approach can enhance students' appreciation of Gu Shi Ci art songs, fostering a deeper connection to the material and a greater respect for Chinese cultural heritage.

The practical implications of this study are well-articulated, particularly in enhancing music education through an integrated approach to vocal techniques and cultural literacy. For instance, based on the findings, specific curriculum changes could include introducing a comprehensive module on Chinese Gu Shi Ci art songs within vocal performance courses. This module will focus on vocal techniques and delve into these songs' historical and cultural contexts. Additionally, incorporating workshops led by experts in traditional Chinese music could provide hands-on experience with traditional instruments and techniques. Collaborative projects between vocalists and traditional Chinese musicians could be a curriculum staple, fostering a deeper understanding of timing, phrasing, and emotional expression. Regular performance opportunities within the institution and in public venues could also be integrated into the curriculum to build confidence and provide practical experience. These changes would ensure that students develop technical skills and gain a rich appreciation for the cultural heritage embedded in Gu Shi Ci's art songs.

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