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Field: Arts
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YANFANG HU

THE MOTIF OF SPRING

IN CHINESE AND EUROPEAN ART SONGS.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY BASED ON SELECTED EXAMPLES

Description of the artistic work

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Warsaw 2026

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ARTISTIC WORK

CD

SPRING MOTIF

IN CHINESE AND EUROPEAN ART SONGS

YANFANG HU
SOPRANO

Valentina Kudrievcova *– piano*

1. Zhou Jiasheng – *When Will the Spring Flowers Bloom and the Autumn Moon Shine? (lyrics by Yu Li) -time 3:05*
2. *Xu Jing Jiang – Spring Moon Over the River. (arr. Xu Jingxin, traditional lyrics)-time 7:30*
3. Sang Tong – "*The Joy of Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring" (lyrics by Yu Li)-time 4:47*
4. Li Yinghai – *Spring Morning (lyrics by Meng Haoran)-time 5:14*
5. Yan Ji – *Spring in the Han Palace – The First Day of Spring (lyrics by Xin Qiji)-time 5:06*
6. Franz Schubert – *"Im Frühling" (lyrics by Ernest Schulz)-time 5:11*
7. *Johannes Brahms – Die Mainacht (lyrics by Ludwig Hölty)-time 3:47*
8. Georges Bizet – *Chanson d'avril (lyrics by Louis Bouilhet)-time 3:27*
9. Paolo Tosti – *Aprile (lyrics by Rocco Emanuele Pagliara)-time 4:06*
10. Pier Adolfo Tirindelli – *O primavera (lyrics by Olga Bonetti)-time 3:03*

Total recording time :45'26

Recorded in 2025

Recording director ***– Szymon Bogdański (No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10)***

Recorded in 2026

Recording director ***– Julia Piegza (No. 6, 7)***

Abstract

The concept of art song combines poetry and music. In art songs, poetry serves as the text, and differences in cultural contexts naturally shape distinct images of spring in Chinese and Western art songs. The author, having studied singing abroad for many years and performed numerous Chinese and European works on the theme of spring in her artistic practice, hopes, on the one hand, that this dissertation will help more people understand the specific differences in how spring is portrayed by Chinese and European writers and composers; on the other hand, the musical and interpretive analysis of selected works may help us perform such pieces more effectively, and thereby better interpret art songs on other themes. Therefore, writing a systematic comparison of Chinese and European art songs inspired by this beautiful season undoubtedly has practical significance.

This work includes an analysis of art songs in four languages, composed by composers from China, Italy, Germany, and France, focusing on the theme of spring. Chinese art songs based on ancient poetry have been compared with works by renowned European composers. They have been subjected to an in-depth theoretical analysis as well as a general evaluation of their performance.

The entire thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter provides a general overview of the history, styles, and trends of European art songs, as well as the development, characteristics of composition, and performance of their Chinese counterparts. The second chapter presents a brief analysis of the literary and musical qualities of the lyrics of art songs on the theme of spring in China and Europe. The third chapter contains a comparative study of the depiction of spring imagery in Chinese and European art songs from the perspective of musical characteristics and compositional techniques. The fourth chapter focuses on the musical analysis and vocal interpretation of ten specific Chinese and European art songs with a spring theme, examining their creative background, compositional techniques, and performance practices, and providing a detailed and in-depth explanation of how to convey the uniqueness and artistry of these compositions during their performance. At the end of each chapter, there is a summary of the content covered.

In a multicultural context, the art song is not merely a "passion" of Romantic poets, but represents a perfect fusion of poetry and music by composers of various eras. Through a comparative study of the texts and music of art songs on the same theme from different

countries, the author has uncovered similarities and differences in the interpretation and methods of expressing the spring motif in Chinese and European works. Different life and cultural backgrounds naturally lead to different interpretations of the same theme. The author hopes that this dissertation will not only enable a full understanding of the similarities and differences in Chinese and European art songs on the theme of spring, but above all, that these songs will serve as a bridge in cultural exchange between China and Europe, supporting the development of art songs in various countries, as well as better promoting and fostering the creation of valuable contemporary Chinese works.

Introduction

1. Reasons for Choosing the Topic

(1) Topic and subject of research

The history of art songs in Europe dates back to ancient times and has undergone various modifications over the centuries. It was present in both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, practiced by the Viennese classics, but it was not until the Romantic era, in the 19th century, that it flourished as an independent and complementary musical genre, constituting a verbal-musical expression that combines the beauty of poetry with the melody created by the composer. It is precisely this perfect combination of poetry and music that makes the art song the highest achievement in the fields of both literature and music, or more broadly, aesthetics. As a genre of vocal music, this form stands out distinctly for its specific means of expression, formal structure, and strong lyricism. Learning to sing art songs helps establish the correct concept of vocal sound and master the basics of singing. It can also be very helpful in developing a singer's overall musical competence and refining their vocal technique.

In both the West and the East, poetry is among the earliest developed literary forms. Moreover, both Chinese and foreign poetry require that it be rich in thought and emotion, full of imagination, and that the language be highly condensed, musical, and rhythmic. Due to linguistic, historical, and cultural differences among various countries and ethnic groups, there are also significant aesthetic differences between them. Therefore, when addressing the same subject matter, Chinese and foreign poets will employ entirely different modes of expression, describing the same subject in completely different ways. Spring is a theme much loved by both Chinese and European poets, and various motifs associated with the spring season frequently appear in the poetic works of the East and West. Due to geographical differences, lifestyle, as well as psychological and cultural differences, spring-themed poetry in the Chinese and Western traditions possesses distinct aesthetic and artistic characteristics. This means that poems dedicated to this season, within these two different cultural spheres, will differ significantly from one another stylistically. Descriptions of spring in Chinese poetry are generally characterized by subtlety, depth, and ambiguity, whereas in Western poetry they are more realistic and detailed, as if the reader were viewing the spring landscape with their own eyes.

In accordance with the concept of the art song, its text consists of poetic words, which naturally leads to different ways of expressing the theme of spring in art songs composed in Europe and in China. During her many years of vocal studies outside China and throughout her artistic practice, the author of this work has sung numerous songs with a spring theme and hopes

that through this study she will contribute to a better understanding of the stylistic differences in the depictions of spring by European and Chinese poets and composers. Furthermore, through musical and vocal analysis of selected works, she aims to assist those interested in interpreting pieces on this theme. This is precisely what constitutes the practical value of this systematic comparative study of Chinese and Western songs with a spring theme.

2. Theoretical, practical, and cultural significance of the topic

2.1. Theoretical significance

Spring has always been a season that inspires poets, who have created countless works describing its beauty. There are also many songs composed on this theme, of high literary and musical value. This work was written in accordance with the principles of scientific rigor and systematic approach, combining theory with vocal practice. Using examples of selected representative vocal works with a spring theme composed in China and Europe, the author conducts a comparative analysis of works by composers from China, Italy, Germany, and France, combining in-depth discussion with a synthetic analysis of the works and their performance. This is an innovative topic in vocal theory, and there is no doubt that it will have a significant impact and importance from the perspective of composition, performance, pedagogy, and research in vocal art.

2.2. Practical Significance

Through musical and performance analysis of selected vocal works with a spring theme composed in China and Europe, the author summarizes the creative and performance techniques and methods used by composers and vocalists, seeking to reveal the artistic characteristics and interpretive demands of the discussed works. This may provide theoretical support for both professional vocalists and music lovers, and point the way toward discovering the beauty of these works, developing one's own musical competencies and vocal abilities, and thereby refining one's artistic craft.

2.3. Cultural Significance

In a multicultural context, comparative studies of the texts and music of art songs with similar themes created in different countries, and the discovery of differences and similarities in the interpretation and techniques of expressing the theme of spring in European art songs, not only allows for a fuller understanding of the distinct or shared characteristics between them but, more importantly, constitutes an important element of cultural exchange between China and Europe, fostering the popularization and development of contemporary Chinese art song.

3. Review of the Literature

After extensive research and a review of the available source literature, the author found that there are many Chinese and foreign studies on Chinese and European art songs, and their number is constantly increasing. However, comparative works devoted to the theme of spring in Chinese and Western art songs are rare. In the article "Analysis and Comparative Study of Chinese and German Art Songs" written by Zhang Jianyu, using the examples of Franz Schubert's "Der Lindenbaum" and Zhao Yuanren's "Teach Me How Not to Miss Her," by Zhao Yuanren, the historical background, musical structure, tonal arrangement, and other aspects of the creative concepts of Chinese and German art songs are compared, and a detailed discussion[1] on this topic is conducted. In Chen Ying's master's thesis, "A Comparative Study of Chinese and Foreign Art Songs: Huang Zi's *'Song of Lotus Picking*' and Schubert's *'Die Forelle*'," using the examples of art songs by Huang Zi and Franz Schubert, their texts, language, piano accompaniment, and other elements, the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western musical styles were discussed, explaining their vocal characteristics and significance, as well as examining their interpretive performance in terms of vocal and emotional aspects[2] . In Hu Xiao's master's thesis, "Analysis and Study of Works with Similar Themes in Chinese and German Art Songs," art songs with similar themes by Chinese, German, and Austrian composers, examining the connections between Chinese and German-language art songs in terms of aesthetics, style, and elements requiring special attention in their performance and teaching[3] . The article "A Comparative Analysis of the Performance Styles of Chinese and Western Art Songs," written by Tian Weilin, presents the differences in the performance styles of these songs in terms of acoustic concepts, breath control, articulation and vocalization, resonance, and technical interpretation[4] . The article "A Comparison of Composition Styles in Contemporary Chinese and 19th-Century German Art Songs," written by Zhao Nan, compares the similarities and differences between German and Chinese art songs in terms of content, melodic composition, and creative techniques. Wang Zhenhua's master's thesis "Beethoven's Love Songs and Their Performance" discusses the creative process of Beethoven's love songs and their characteristics, analyzing the four stages of their creation, their lyrics, and their

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[1] Zhang Jianyu: Analysis and Comparative Study of Chinese and German Art Songs [J], *"Popular Literature and Art*," 2013(14): 130–132

[2] Chen Ying: A Comparative Study of Chinese and Foreign Art Songs*:* Huang Zi's *"Song of Lotus Picking"* and Schubert's *"Die Forelle"* [D], Lanzhou University, 2022

[3] https://ms.mbd.baidu.com/r/1PUtlL5OZPi?f=cp&u=54c372226c87c908 [accessed March 5, 2025]

[4] Tian, Weili. *"The Impact of the Introduction of Western Music on Chinese Music"* [J]. Beifang Yinyue **(**Northern Music**)**, 2024, no. 8, pp. 44–50.

musical features. Using examples of Beethoven's classic works from various periods of his career, it reveals the artistic charm of his love songs[5] . Huang Jinming's master's thesis "Mahler's Love and Art Songs" analyzes the composer's own love stories in conjunction with the texts of his art songs and examines the influence of Mahler's love life during various periods on the songs he composed. In the article "The Style of Death and Poetic Color—An Attempt at Analyzing Franz Schubert's Art Songs," Zhang Rong presents a profile of Franz Schubert, a representative of German-Austrian art song from the Romantic period, focusing on his later works, particularly the song *"Der Zwerg*." In an effort to uncover the creative techniques and philosophical concepts of this *"King of Song*" (as Schubert was called), Zhang Rong examines the work within its cultural and historical context, as well as from the perspective of the score and vocal interpretation, to describe his poetic style and characterize the features of his compositions from his later creative period[6] . Li Jinyi's master's thesis, "The Creation of Female Characters in Schubert's Art Songs," analyzes his creative environment and examines the characteristics of the female characters depicted in his vocal lyrics, and from this perspective, also the style and characteristics of his art songs.[7]

In summary, a preliminary discussion on the comparison of Chinese and Western art songs has already been conducted, presenting many valuable insights. However, most of these articles analyze art songs from the perspective of individual works, primarily discussing the styles of art songs created by various composers from a micro perspective. The author believes that limiting the analysis to individual works and styles of art songs does not provide sufficient depth of insight into the subject. Previous research on Chinese and Western art songs has focused mainly on themes such as love, death, women, landscape, and the countryside, while few comparative studies have been conducted on Chinese and Western art songs dedicated to spring. In this study, using the theme of spring, we will compare European and Chinese art songs by examining differences in the creative and compositional techniques employed. Our aim will be to highlight the similarities and differences in the musical styles of European and Chinese composers who create songs on the theme of spring.

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[5] Wang Zhenhua: *"Beethoven's Love Songs and Their Performance"* [D], Henan University, 2009
[6] Zhang Rong: The Style of Death and Poetic Color—An Analysis of Franz Schubert's Art Song *"Der Zwerg"* [J], Art Research, 2022(05):48–52
[7] Li Jinyi: "The Creation of Female Characters in Schubert's Art Songs," Xi'an Conservatory of Music, 2007

4. Research Concepts and Methods

4.1. Research Concepts

This study aims to examine art songs with a spring theme composed in Europe and China. The author conducts a comparative analysis in terms of historical origins, literary characteristics, means of expression and imagery, and vocal technique. The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter summarizes the history, style, and developmental trends of art songs in Europe, and discusses the development, creative characteristics, and vocal techniques of Chinese art songs. The second chapter contains a brief literary and musical analysis of art songs with spring themes composed in China and Europe. Chapter three presents a comparative study of the imagery in Chinese and European art songs with spring themes in terms of musical characteristics and compositional techniques. Chapter Four is devoted to ten selected Chinese and European works with spring themes. It includes a musical analysis and performance interpretation covering the creative context, compositional and performance techniques, and discusses in detail the methods of performing these works, allowing for the highlighting of their uniqueness and artistic value. The conclusions are presented in the Conclusion.

4.2. Research Methods

(1) Literature Review Method

The literature review method is a method of identifying, explaining, and solving problems through the analysis and examination of source texts (books, archives, materials, documents, etc.). This study analyzes the development and genre of art songs in China and Europe based on collected literature and online data. Subsequently, through collected monographs, doctoral dissertations, academic articles, and conference presentations devoted to research on Chinese and European art songs with a spring theme, the author will aim to present an accurate assessment of the current state of research and to create a precise research plan based on reliable data and the results of studies conducted by other scholars.

(2) Comparative research method

Comparative research is a method that analyzes differences between specific objects. By analyzing the characteristics of literary texts and musical scores, creative techniques, methods of expression, and performance techniques, the author will examine the differences and similarities in how the theme of spring is expressed in art songs from Europe and China. Furthermore, through a detailed analysis of selected examples of Chinese and European art songs with a spring theme, she will describe their artistic characteristics and principles of vocal performance, which will provide useful guidance for artistic practice.

(3) Method of musical analysis

Musical analysis is a unique research method used in the field of musicology, involving the analysis of the performance of a specific instrumental or vocal piece, including an examination of its form, harmonies, melodies, rhythm, orchestration, composition, and so on. In this paper, we will review and classify the repertoire of Chinese and European art songs with a spring theme. We will select representative works and conduct their musical analysis and interpretation of content, examining musical techniques and the expression of imagery across various traditions and cultures, using them as objective, precise, and comprehensive evidence to support the arguments presented in this paper.

Chapter 1. Sources of Art Song Development in China and Europe

1.1 The Development of Art Song in Europe

Art song is a fusion of music and literature. The history of poetry serving as the lyrics in art songs in Europe dates back to Homeric times[8] , while in China it originates from the creation *of the "Book of Songs"*[9] . In those days, poetry and music were intertwined, which is why singing was a form of expression for poetic works.

Poetry and music, though they have their own structures and forms of expression, possess their own unique forms, but in essence revolve around shared content—human thoughts and feelings. The origins of artistic song can be found in ancient Greece, in Homer's great literary works, *the "Iliad"* and *the "Odyssey"*[10] . Before the 12th century BCE, oral poetry already existed in ancient Greece; it was widely disseminated and could be sung with musical accompaniment. It had a profound influence on later European literature and vocal music. For various reasons, much of the European music from the period of ancient Greece has not survived in its entirety[11] .

From the 11th century onward, monophonic secular music became the dominant genre. Among its performers, the troubadours stood out; they first appeared in the 11th century in southern France[12] . Troubadours composed both poetry and melody. French performers of this genre were divided into those from the south *("troubadour")* and those from the north *("trouvère").* They differed in the language used in their texts. Troubadours from southern France expressed love in forms such as *the "canzo"* (love song) and *the "pastorela"* (shepherd's song). In Germany during the 12th–13th centuries, love songs (*"Minnesang"*) emerged; in Italy, the main genres of secular poetic music were *the "canzona"* and *the "sonnet";* and in Spain, *the "cantiga"* and *the "villancico"*[13] . The emergence of troubadours contributed to the development of European secular music. They composed many types of poetry, and their

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[8] *The "Iliad"* and *"Odyssey,"* Homer's epic works (12th century BCE – 8th century BCE), are two long epics written by the ancient Greek poet based on short folk songs passed down orally through generations.

[9] *The "Book of Songs"* (11th century BCE – 6th century BCE) marked the beginning of ancient Chinese poetry. It is the earliest collection of poetry in China.

[10] The historical period of ancient Greece is dated to around the 5th–4th centuries BCE.

[11] Ancient Greece was one of the earliest Western civilizations. The period of ancient Greece was characterized by monophonic music, often combined with poetry and dance. Singing was accompanied, and musical notation was written using letters.

[12] The figure of the troubadour, also known as a wandering singer, emerged in the late 11th and 13th centuries.

[13] *"Minnesang"* is secular music created and performed by German knights and nobility, similar to troubadours. They composed and performed their own songs, known as *"Minnesang."* Their themes include love, religion, and politics.

music was characterized by full phrases and a distinct rhythm based on the meter of the poetry. The distinct rhythm, combined with poetic meter, ensured that poetry and music were perfectly integrated. Medieval secular and religious music influenced one another. The former began to develop based on 11th-century Latin songs, followed by a flourishing of songs in local dialects, mainly thanks to French troubadours and German authors of love songs. At the same time, instrumental music was an important component of medieval secular music. During the Renaissance, between the 14th and 16th centuries, under the influence of cultural and intellectual changes, religious music flourished[14] . The most common vocal genres were the *"mass"* and the "motet." In the 15th and 16th centuries, polyphonic music developed with remarkable intensity, reaching its peak. On October 31, 1517, in Germany, Martin Luther (1483–1546) initiated the Reformation movement within the church. German replaced Latin in the composition of church songs *("Kirchenlied")* of a national character. A similar trend occurred in other European countries. In France, metrical psalms *("psalter")* appeared, and in the British Isles, English hymns *("anthem").* By the mid-16th century, religious music was becoming increasingly secular. During the same period, the most representative vocal genres were *the* Italian *"madrigal"* and *the* French *"chanson."*

At that time, the development of musical instruments also accelerated, linking music with poetry; for example, the lute played a major role in the creation of art songs with accompaniment. It provided a refined musical backdrop for songs in the style of accompanying harmony or melodic polyphony, enabling a further perfect fusion of poetry and music, which was synonymous with progress in the development of song.

The Baroque period of 1600–1750 marked the culmination of the development of polyphonic music and early opera. In 1637, the first opera house was established in Venice*; "opera seria"* emerged, along with *the* French *"tragedie lyrique*,*"* the German *"Singspiel*,*"* English masques, and grand vocal forms such as the oratorio and cantata. Instruments such as the organ, harpsichord, and violin also entered a period of magnificent development. In the 17th century, Germany began to develop the form of solo sung poetry, often in the form of strophic or variation songs, and later also through-composed songs, where the accompaniment often provided a simple harmonic context. This song form is considered the prototype of the 19th-century Romantic art song.

[14] The Renaissance was an intellectual and cultural movement in Europe during the 14th–16th centuries, originating in Florence. At its core was humanism, which had a profound influence on the subsequent development of art.

Poetry in the form of art song texts as an independent art form emerged in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The outbreak of the French Revolution in May 1789, which opposed feudalism and promoted equality, liberty, fraternity, and bourgeois democratic ideals[15] . The further liberation of thought in music manifested itself, on the one hand, in nationalist movements and patriotism, and on the other, in a love of nature, a longing for happiness and a beautiful life, and a striving for ideal states and romanticism. Therefore, musical works emphasized subjective feelings, personal emotions, and a pursuit of naturalness and simplicity, reflecting people's thoughts and desires. Due to the further liberation of thought and culture, European music reached its golden age.

Under the influence of the French Revolution, there was a further liberation of thought; freedom and equality began to be emphasized alongside the liberation of human nature. A particular musical style shifted from the church, through the courts, and out into society. It began to reach the masses, although the mass and the oratorio remained important solemn musical forms. At the beginning of the 19th century, European artists ceased to limit themselves to works of a religious nature. The pursuit of personal ideals became dominant. Musicians focused more on national characteristics, sought inspiration in folk art, and expressed their ideals and desires through fantastical themes and imagery. Music emphasized emotion; rationality took a back seat, and all phenomena of the world and life were expressed through the creators' subjective feelings. Many innovations were introduced into the creative process, which enriched and accelerated the development of musical forms. This new movement and style is known as Romantic music.

The art song is a combination of poetry and music, and the accompaniment plays an important role in it. Representative composers of this genre include Franz Schubert (1797–1828), Robert Schumann (1810–1856), Johannes Brahms (1833–1897), Louis-Hector Berlioz (1803–1869), Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893), Antonín Leopold Dvořák (1841–1904), and others. In fact, Franz Schubert made outstanding achievements in the field of art song, and art song experienced unprecedented development during this period.

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[15] Du, Xiang. *"The Aesthetics of 19th-Century Art Song in Germany and France and Their Comparison" [*D]. Beijing: Capital Normal University, 2002, pp. 1–5.

1.2. Styles and Trends in European Art Song

1.2.1. German-Austrian Art Song

The German-language art song is called *the "Lied."* German-Austrian art song serves as a model for art song worldwide and is also a point of reference for its European forms. As early as the 12th and 13th centuries, German minnesingers composed songs primarily on the theme of love. In the 14th–16th centuries, during the Renaissance, German secular music flourished, leading to the emergence of the solo form—*the "Lied."*

In the 17th century, Germans also took an interest in Italian opera. In 17th- and 18th-century Europe, Haydn (Franz Joseph Haydn 1732–1809), Mozart (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1756–1791), and later Beethoven (Ludwig van Beethoven 1770–1827) focused on forms such as opera, symphony, sonata, oratorio, and string quartet. However, German folk music continued to develop. German songs, in addition to using the German language in their lyrics, were characterized by the use of poetry by well-known poets such as Goethe (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe 1749–1832), Heine (Heinrich Heine 1797–1856), Schiller (Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, 1759–1805), and Rückert (Friedrich Rückert, 1788–1866). The content itself was often dramatic in nature. The musical structure was usually determined by the lyrical or dramatic character of the poetry, and the piano accompaniment had a special relationship with the vocal line, striving to convey the meaning of the text musically.

In the 19th century, the development of lyric poetry was a clear sign of the emergence of German Romanticism. Art song flourished alongside the development of lyric poetry, and the popularity of the piano in European homes contributed to the popularization of the Romantic art song.

The style of German-Austrian music differed from the cultures of other European nations. A characteristic feature was its lyrical, imaginative texts, especially in the works of Schubert (Franz Schubert), Weber (Carl Maria von Weber 1786–1826), Mendelssohn (Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy 1809–1847), and Schumann (Robert Schumann 1810–1856). Their music was dominated by natural, melodic lines and a pure sound.

The political backdrop of 19th-century Europe was quite complex, and the advance of democratic thought and bourgeois freedom contributed to the liberation of the artists themselves[16] . Composers and poets of this period valued emotion and sought to express

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[16] Du, Xiang. *"The Aesthetics of 19th-Century Art Song in Germany and France and Their* Comparison" [D]. Beijing: Capital Normal University, 2002, p. 2

themselves. Examples of this include song cycles such as *Schumann's "Dichterliebe" (Dichterliebe)* by Schumann or *"Winter Journey" (Winterreise)* by Schubert. Furthermore, vocal forms began to diversify. Composers often chose nature as a theme, creating many art songs. Examples include Schubert's *"Spring,"* Johann Strauss's (1825–1899) *"Voices of Spring" ("Frühlingsstimmenwalzer"),* and Brahms's (1833–1897) *"May Night*." The texts of German-Austrian songs, as previously noted, were often based on the poetry of prominent Romantic poets of the time.

In the late Romantic period, Wagner (Richard Wagner, 1813–1883) sought to deeply express human emotions by combining recitative vocal melodies with the intonation of poetry and creating an independent piano accompaniment and complex harmony. This style had a significant influence on the German-Austrian art song. Well-known art song composers of this period include the Austrians Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) and Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) and Richard Strauss (1864–1949), who were important composers of the late Romantic period, primarily creating, in addition to songs, symphonic poems and operas.

1.2.2 Italian Art Song

Early Italian art music focused mainly on secular music, sung in local dialects. In the 13th and 14th centuries, wandering artists *("minstrels")* emerged, who contributed significantly to the development of secular music. In the 13th century, single-movement dance forms called *"ballata"* were popular in Italy, which in the 14th century evolved into three-part polyphonic works. The lyrics of the ballata often dealt with love and morality. There were also folk songs *("lauda")* with religious themes.

In the 14th century, the Renaissance began to spread across various Italian cities, emphasizing the importance of the individual, opposing divine authority, the asceticism of the Church, and the concept of the afterlife, and instead extolling love and affirming earthly life[17] . Around 1530, a new musical genre emerged in Italy—*the "madrigal"*—which became the most representative polyphonic form of secular Renaissance music in the country[18] . Another genre was *the "caccia,"* and through experimentation, artists created a new art form—opera[19] .

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[17] https://mq.mbd.baidu.com/r/1PQvlwZ3h16?f=cp&u=7784fbce13c798c1 [accessed: 2025.03.21]

[18] In 16th-century Italy, the form of secular music consisted of polyphonic choral songs, with texts usually in the form of prose or poetry.

[19] *The* Italian *"caccia"* is a form of polyphonic secular music whose origins date back to 14th-century France.

Composer Jacopo Peri (1561–1633) and poet Ottavio Rinuccini created the opera *"Dafne,"* which had its informal premiere in 1597 at court (the score has been lost). At the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, the center of opera shifted from Venice to Naples[20] . A representative composer of the Neapolitan opera school was Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725). The Neapolitan school placed particular emphasis on the beauty of the voice, which allowed for an unprecedented development of vocal techniques, especially coloratura. In the first half of the 18th century, the Neapolitan school was known throughout the world, and many of its masters worked in various European countries.

Italy has centuries of experience in creating lyrical songs and a long history *of "bel canto"*—beautiful singing. Although the country faced certain difficulties in the development of song, early Italian art songs from the 17th and 18th centuries are full of flowing melodies and rich in emotion, combining music and poetry. Composer and singer Giulio Caccini (1551–1618) composed the Italian art song *"Amarilli, mia bella*,*"* which became his signature work. The text is drawn from ancient medieval lyric poetry, and the melody is imbued with simplicity and a sacred atmosphere. It allows for a profound experience of both secular love and religious solemnity, combining the purity of love with spiritual joy. This piece enjoyed great popularity in Europe during its time and is still performed by many famous singers at concerts to this day.

In the 19th century, the singer Angelica Catalani (1780–1849) performed *the song "I no longer feel the flame of youth in my heart"* (composed by G. Pacini), an example of the distinct, ornamental style of Italian singing developed in the 17th and 18th centuries in leading operas. This ornate singing style had a significant influence on prominent 19th-century Italian composers such as Rossini (1792–1868), Donizetti (1797–1848), and Bellini (1801–1835), who also made significant contributions to the field of art songs.

1.2.3. French Art Song

French art songs have a long history. As early as the 11th century, many liturgical works appeared, and the 12th and 13th centuries were the era of French poets and troubadours. Philippe de Vitry (1291–1361), a poet and musician, created the literary work **Ars Nova*,* in which he introduced the term "new art"[21] . The oldest score, *"Roman de Fauvel*,*"* was composed between 1310 and 1314. It is a long, satirical epic containing 167 musical pieces, including religious, secular, polyphonic, and traditional music.

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[20] In the 17th and 18th centuries, during a period of political division, Italy was a center of culture and the arts.
[21] Wang Dayan, *"Introduction to Art Songs."* Shanghai Publishing House, 2008, p. 73.

The chanson, or secular song, was popular in France during the 14th–16th centuries. It was characterized by beautiful melodies, a distinct rhythm, and themes that were primarily romantic. By the mid-16th century, there were many polyphonic solo songs in France accompanied by the lute. In the early 17th century, with the arrival of the monodic style from Italy, romantic songs (romances) rapidly developed; these were sung with accompaniment by the lute, six-string guitar, or harpsichord. The accompaniment in these songs began to be notated in a formal manner, replacing figured bass.

At that time, there were many types of songs, such as aristocratic, delicate courtly, pastoral, lyrical (inspired by the works of troubadours), narrative, popular urban, dance, and drinking songs, as well as political and satirical ballads. In the 15th and 16th centuries, notable composers included Josquin des Prez (1450–1521)[22] and Clément Janequin (1485–1558)[23] .

In the 18th century, under the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), songwriting moved toward a folk style, though many of his own romantic works have fallen into obscurity.

French art songs were largely influenced by Italian music. On the eve of the French Revolution, Jean-Jacques Rousseau stated: "The perfect style of French music should combine the simplicity of Italian melody, German harmony, and French declamation technique"[24] . In the 19th century, Mengozzi published *"Methods of Singing at the Paris Conservatory,"* in which he systematically explained issues related to the study of bel canto. He encouraged a break from Italian influences and the adoption of a unique French expression in music and declamation.

In 1841, Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) formally established the genre of *the* French art song known as *"Mélodie"* with his vocal suite *"Les Nuits d'été,"* distinguishing it from German and Austrian art songs. Following Berlioz, Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864) published a song collection containing works of various styles, mainly composed in the manner of German art songs. During the same period, Charles Gounod (1818–1893), a representative of French lyric opera, developed French music by combining elegance, clarity, and symmetry. He was an innovative composer with a broad perspective on musical material and exceptional technical

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[22] Josquin des Prez, a French composer and outstanding Renaissance musician, author of many liturgical works and the chanson *"Nymphes des bois"* (Le Chant des Nymphes).
[23] Clément Janequin, a French Renaissance composer, known for the piece *"Le Chant des Oiseaux"* (Song of the Birds).
[24] Wang, Dayan. *"An Introduction to Art* Song" [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing House, 2008, p. 37.

skills that set him apart from other French composers. In addition to beautiful operas *("Faust." "Romeo and Juliet"),* he also wrote songs (his well-known works *include "Sérénade"* and *"Le premier jour de mai"*).

In the second half of the 19th century, the French vocal school and composers such as Jacques-François-Fromental-Élie Halévy (1799–1862), Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880), Jules Émile Frédéric Massenet (1842–1912), and Édouard Lalo (1823–1892) created operas that well reflected the delicacy, subtlety, and allusion rather than directness and restraint of French art songs. Georges Bizet (1838–1875), the composer of the famous and innovative opera **Carmen*,* with its bold subject matter, wrote 48 songs, the most famous of which is the dramatic *"Adieux de l'hôtesse arabe."* Other notable works include *"Sonnet," "Pastorale,"* and *"Berceuse,"* which stand out for their unique style. His songs are lively, colorful, and somewhat exotic, and among his most important works are *"Partir," "Avril,"* and *"La coccinelle."*

Composers such as Gabriel Fauré, Claude Debussy (1862–1918), and Maurice Ravel (1875–1937), drawing inspiration from the poetry of the greatest French poets, such as Victor Hugo (1802–1885), Charles Marie René Leconte de Lisle (1818–1894), and Charles Pierre Baudelaire (1821–1867), composed songs that perfectly captured these qualities. This style persists to this day and continues to dominate French art song. The continuators of the French song tradition in the 20th century were Francis Poulenc, Jacques Ibert, and Eric Satie

1.2.4 Art Song in Other European Countries

Beginning in the 19th century, a national liberation movement emerged in the Czech lands, which were under Austrian rule, and this movement found expression in the work of composers. As a result, outstanding musicians emerged, represented by Smetana and Dvořák.

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), the creator of Czech opera and founder of the national music school. Smetana's main achievement was laying the foundation for the development of Czech national opera and the establishment of symphonic poetry. He was the author of eight operas and the symphonic poem collection *"My Homeland*," comprising six independent yet interconnected symphonic poems that together pay homage to the history of the Czech nation and celebrate the homeland. Smetana's successor was Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904), who left behind masterpieces in the fields of symphony, opera, chamber music, choral music, and solo singing. Dvořák composed over a hundred songs with beautiful melodies and rich content. He preferred the form of sectional and variable songs. His works were characterized by rich

harmonic color and excellent accompaniment texture. Dvořák's most representative songs include *"Songs My Mother Taught Me," "Love Songs,"* and others.

Influenced by the strong nationalist movement in Europe, Norwegian national culture developed alongside it. Composers created patriotic songs en masse, using material related to national culture to create works of musical art. Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) was one of the outstanding figures of this period and certainly the most famous Norwegian composer of the 19th century with an international reputation. His work spanned orchestral compositions, piano pieces, chamber music, and vocal works. Grieg's music is simple, pure, and full of emotion. He composed over 140 songs, including works such as *"The Swan," "I Love You,"* and the song cycle *"Songs of the Mountains."* Grieg's works express his passionate love for his homeland and its people, harmoniously blending poetry with music. The Norwegian composer drew on folk music, using it as a source of melodies and rhythms, which gave his music a distinct national character and strong individual traits. Due to language barriers, Grieg's songs were popular primarily in Norway.

In Finland at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, the most famous composer was Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), a representative of the national school of music, who gained fame through his symphonic poem *"Finlandia."* He wrote over 100 songs and vocal works, including such pieces as *"The Black Rose"* and *"The Rustle of the Reeds."* The national concept in Sibelius's works ceased to be limited to the simple use of folk melodies, encompassing both an individual understanding of the characteristics of Finnish folk music and the incorporation of compositional styles and techniques from other Western countries.

Spain was once a symbol of medieval power and civilization, but over the centuries its cultural and political life had fallen into disarray. From the second half of the 19th century, national music began to gain prominence. From the beg , through Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909), Enrique Granados (1867–1916), and ending with Manuel de Falla (1876–1946), Spain created a distinct musical movement.

The Polish state, which disappeared from the world map at the end of the 18th century and regained its independence only after World War I, also nurtured its national traditions, whether in exile or under foreign rule. The most distinguished composers of this period were Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1841), a brilliant master of piano music and the author of 19 songs set to the words of renowned Polish Romantic poets; Stanisław Moniuszko (1819–1872)—the

creator of the Polish national opera and a collection of 300 songs—as well as Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937) and Mieczysław Karłowicz (1876–1909)

Russian art song was also influenced by European art song, but unlike other European works, its Russian counterparts have a very distinct artistic character rooted in national culture and are an important part of world music. The emergence of the Russian art song was closely linked to the European art song, and it reached its peak in the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. Its representatives include composers such as Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) and Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943). Tchaikovsky wrote over 130 art songs as well as other works, including symphonies, operas, and many other genres. Although he was active during the same period as "The Mighty Handful," his work differed significantly from that of the famous Russian Five. Tchaikovsky's art songs are characterized by drama and a strong lyrical quality; they employ compositional techniques familiar from Europe and incorporate elements of Russian folk music, which accounts for their high artistic level. Following Rachmaninoff, many composers devoted themselves to creating the Russian art song, including Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Slonimsky, Myaskovsky, and others.

The Russian art song continues to evolve and consistently influences the entire artistic world.

1.2.5 The Development of Art Song in China

China is one of the four great ancient civilizations, and the origins of the Chinese art song date back to the dynasties of[25] .

A turning point and a new beginning.

The "Book of Songs" is the earliest collection of poems, dating from the period between the 11th and 6th centuries BCE[26] . By the time of the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046–771 BCE), there were already professional and folk musicians who composed numerous musical works, but due to limitations in writing and writing tools, these works were recorded mainly as texts, without musical notation. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, due to wars and other reasons, many songs were lost. *The "Book of Songs"* was a collection of songs gathered from various vassal states, edited and organized by officials and musicians, with Confucius also participating in the process. The collection is clearly divided into three parts: *"Feng," "Ya,"* and *"Song." "Feng"* consists of folk songs, *"Ya"* consists of literary works

[25] The ancient Chinese period was exceptionally long and ended in 1840 with the Opium War.
[26] *The "Book of Songs"* (11th–6th century BCE) marks the beginning of ancient Chinese poetry, containing a total of 311 works.

(including court songs), and *"Song"* consists of ritual songs and dances. Among these, folk songs are the most numerous—a total of 160 pieces. The "Book of Songs" also includes literary works from *the pre-Qin* period, including famous, high-quality songs such as *"Spring Snow,"* which were representative literary songs of the time, distinct from popular songs.

Development and Maturity. The period from the Han Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty and the Northern Song Dynasty (202 BCE – 1127 CE).

From the *Han Dynasty* to the height of the Tang Dynasty, Chinese artistic songs developed continuously, reaching their peak. The most notable feature of this period was that many influential and talented poets contributed to the creation of songs. The artistic quality of the texts improved significantly, and many songs became timeless classics. During the *Tang* period, notable poets included Li Bai (701–762), Bai Juyi (772–846), Liu Yuxi (772–842), and many others who combined literature and music; their works are considered essential reading for all students of musical art. It is worth noting that the artistic style known as "songs for stringed instruments" developed rapidly, becoming the mainstream of classical music. Songs for stringed instruments are songs sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments, analogous to most contemporary songs with piano accompaniment. Among them are famous pieces such *as "Spring," "Snow Maiden," "High Mountains," "Flowing Water,"* and *"The Phoenix Seeking a Mate."* During this period, ancient zithers were considered court instruments and associated with poetry. Songs for the zither shared this same character. Traditional Chinese art songs, composed for voice with zither accompaniment, flourished and reached maturity during this period.

Decline. **The Southern *Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing* dynasties (1127–1840).**

The fall of *the* Northern *Song Dynasty* (960–1127) allowed culturally relatively backward northern nomadic peoples to enter China, where they established a center of power. Culture and art, especially high art, suffered serious losses. Literati of *the* Southern *Song Dynasty*, plunged into grief over the loss of their country, could no longer enjoy high art as they had during the heyday of the Tang Dynasty. The Southern *Song and Yuan* Dynasties brought about the decline of this sphere of life, which had completely degenerated. High art began to decline.

Renaissance. The End of *the Qing Dynasty* and the Modern Period (1840–1919).

During this period, Chinese art songs, which had nearly died out, began to revive. The stimulus for this revival was the developing Western musical art. Following economic and cultural stagnation since the *Ming and Qing* periods, China lagged far behind the Western world. By the *mid-Qing* Dynasty, China was already poor and weak economically, culturally, and militarily. Under these circumstances, Western culture began to penetrate China. Western music, represented by the piano, had a tremendous impact on the Chinese music scene. Some Chinese musicians began to blend Western music with traditional Chinese music, rediscovering its essence. As a result, many ancient high-class songs reappeared on the music scene, and Chinese art song began to revive. During this period, Chinese art songs adopted the accompaniment forms and vocal techniques of Western art songs, blending Western instruments with folk instruments and classical singing with traditional folk techniques.

Chinese art songs in the first half of the 20th century.

Modern Chinese art songs, drawing on the compositional techniques of German and Austrian art songs, incorporated these techniques into the Chinese musical tradition, creating works that were both national in character and modern[27] . Since the 1920s, Chinese musicians have promoted the idea of the Sinicization of art songs, modifying melodies, harmonies, and piano accompaniment, which has resulted in many artistically diverse works. The school song movement was a significant moment in the history of modern Chinese music, having a huge impact on the development of Chinese art songs. Its significance lay primarily in the introduction of Western music, attempts to apply European compositional techniques, and the creation of songs in Western musical scales. These works began to evolve in the areas of harmony, polyphony, and counterpoint, with greater attention paid to tonality and formal structure. Furthermore, the song lyrics became the seed of a new poetry, breaking with the conventions of traditional verse.

In the 1920s and 1930s, numerous composers wrote art songs, but compared to the works composed by such prominent figures as Xiao Youmei (1884–1940) and Zhao Yuanren (1892–1982), these were somewhat less significant. Nevertheless, these works provided valuable experience in the creation of early Chinese art songs. For example, Zhao Yuanren's

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[27] Xie, Jiaxuan *"The Unity of Poetry, Music, and the Piano—On the Cultural Value and Aesthetic Transformation of Piano Accompaniment in Art Songs to Classical Chinese Poetry"[*J]. Nawa Legend 2025, no. 23, pp. 56–57.

representative works include *"How Can I Not Think of Her," "Sounds of the Sea,"* and *"The Hymn of Xiamen University,"* and his translations of Western works include, for instance, *"Alice in Wonderland."*

The fusion of European culture with its traditional Chinese counterpart, along with innovation and synthesis, led to the creation of many outstanding songs that reflected the spirit of the era and laid the foundation for the Sinicization of art songs.

Art songs in the second half of the 20th century.

From the founding of the People's Republic of China (October 1, 1949) to the period before the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), art songs developed significantly[28] .

The work of composers in the field of art songs during this period can be divided into three categories: art songs based on arrangements of folk songs, art songs based on traditional poetic forms and new verses, and lyrical art songs. In the process of creating art songs, composers in the People's Republic of China faced an important task: specifically, the creation of contemporary art songs that would reflect the spirit of the era and possess national characteristics. Gradually, a realist trend took shape, most notably represented by the works of Ding Shande (1911–1995) and Li Yinghai (1927–2007).

Ding Shande (1911–1995) was one of the most famous modern Chinese musicians, with significant achievements and contributions in the fields of composition, music education, and social activism. In 1947, he studied at the Paris Conservatory in France. During his stay in France, based on an English translation *of* the ancient Chinese poem *"The Mysterious Sound of the Flute,"* he composed an art song in the impressionist style. After returning to his homeland, Ding Shande adapted, organized, and arranged many folk songs, such as *"Charming Rose," "Mai La,"* and *"When the Acacias Bloom,"* creating a new genre of art songs based on folk song arrangements. His works provided valuable insights into the creation of folk-style art songs and hold an important place in the development of Chinese art song.

[28]*The "Cultural Revolution"* (1966–1976) was a proletarian revolution that took place in China, mistakenly initiated by the country's leaders, which brought an extremely painful experience to the Chinese people of that time.

In the 1980s, the field of art songs flourished thanks to a group of outstanding composers and their excellent works[29] . The creative output of this period reached an unprecedented level of prosperity, reflecting the diverse artistic concepts and compositional techniques active on the Chinese music scene, creating a multitude of concepts, styles, languages, and techniques that coexisted and complemented one another.

The most representative composers of this period are Shi Guangnan (1940–1990), Zheng Qiufeng (1931–), Shang Deyi (1932–2020), and Gu Jianfen (1935–). These composers had a solid artistic foundation, underwent rigorous professional training, possessed rich life experiences, and had a unique individual approach to creativity and, importantly, artistic aspirations. They composed mainly lyrical art songs that were both sophisticated and accessible to a wide audience. Thanks to their exceptional artistic beauty, their works had a profound influence on shaping the musical sensibilities of the entire nation. The main features of their work are: the expression of true beauty associated with emotions close to people's hearts; musical images that were warmly received by the public; the fusion of national musical thought with modern consciousness, resulting in the emergence of beautiful melodies; and the pursuit of lyrical expression in musical language, creating individual beauty.

Summary of Chapter One:

1. **The Development of Art Songs Around the World.**

Art songs have come a long way over the years, and many poets and composers have dedicated their lives to creating them. Due to different historical backgrounds and experiences, composers of various periods wrote art songs with distinct characters, styles, and techniques of expression. In the early 20th century, early Chinese art songs, like their German and Austrian counterparts, were primarily accompanied by the piano. School songs served as the foundation for piano accompaniment in Chinese art songs. In the 1930s and 1940s, a group of composers who had studied in Europe and Japan applied Western compositional techniques, styles, and harmonies, blending them with Chinese national culture. They perfectly captured Chinese melody and rhythm in their works, ushering in a new era of piano accompaniment in China. Art songs are a treasure of human art, and their performance requires singers to possess a high level of cultural sophistication and vocal skill. European art songs reached their peak of development in the late

[29] Zheng, Jiage. *"A Study on the Interpretation of Art Songs Based on Luo Zhongrong's Modern Compositional Techniques"* [D]. Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 2008, pp. 1–5.

18th and 19th centuries, during which time many outstanding works were composed. After the 19th century, Chinese art songs drew inspiration from Western art songs, combining poetic text, singing, and instrumental music to realize the mutual interpenetration of music and literature.

2. The National Character of Art Songs.

Over the course of more than a century, from the emergence of art songs to their heyday, the national spirit of various countries was always present in them, inspiring many poets and musicians. Composers and poets, in creating songs, unconsciously incorporated elements of national culture into them, which were more or less visible in their works. Many works were closely linked to folk songs, ballads, legends, and fairy tales. In the process of creating these works, emphasis was often placed on the national language, which had a significant impact on cultural heritage. The content of these works always reflected their local character; even when they described the spiritual world of people, the beauty of nature, or expressed a sense of loneliness, they always conveyed the spirit of a given nation's culture.

Chapter 2. Analysis of European and Chinese art songs with a spring theme from the perspective of literary creativity

2.1 The Literary Nature of the Texts of European and Chinese Art Songs with a Spring Theme

2.1.1. The Literary Quality of the Texts

Art songs are a perfect combination of poetry and music. From an aesthetic point of view, language—the expression of poetry—is more direct than music, which often moves composers. Therefore, poetry is the driving force behind composers' work.

In ancient Greece, people had an aesthetic approach to poetry and music in which "poetry was superior and music was subordinate"[30] . Poetry itself contained music and song, which meant that it guided music. During the Romantic period from the late 18th to the 19th century, poetry served to express the spirit of humanism[31] and, as such, sought to describe and express specific phenomena, especially nature. Poetry explored the scope of human nature, delved into its mysteries, and the rich Romantic imagination and passion reached deep into subjective emotions, revealing the richness of inner truth and the power of emotion, becoming the core and main purpose of Romanticism.

Outstanding figures emerged, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), born in Frankfurt am Main, a German thinker, writer, and scholar, and the most famous representative of Weimar Classicism. As a poet, playwright, and prose writer, he is one of the greatest German writers and a prominent figure in world literature. Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) was a renowned poet, philosopher, historian, and playwright of 18th-century Germany and a representative of the German Enlightenment, and Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), a German lyric poet and prose writer, In England, George Gordon Byron (1788–1824), a great Romantic poet of the early 19th century, and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), a British Romantic poet, the first socialist writer, philosopher, essayist, political writer, reformer, Platonist, and idealist, were active.

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[30] Wang, Ling. *"Theories of Western Aesthetic Education and the Influence of Confucian Musical-Educational Thought in China on Aesthetic* Education" [J]. Journal of Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics, 2010, No. 4, pp. 101–104.

[31] Humanism – a philosophical movement and worldview that focuses on the human being, their dignity, freedom, and development within their social and natural environment [https://pl.wikipedia .org. accessed: May 25, 2025]

The poetry of these writers—such as Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Byron, and Shelley—is characterized by attention to the rules and integrity of the verse, a uniform rhythm, and vivid imagery. These qualities perfectly suited the musical style of the time, providing the best literary texts for the creation of art songs. An example is Schubert's song *"In Spring" ("Im Frühling")*, whose text comes from *the "Poetry Diary"* of the German Romantic poet Ernst Schulze (1789–1817), written between June 29, 1813, and February 17, 1817, and published by Friedrich Arnold Brockhaus in 1822.

"Chanson de Printemps" ("Spring Song") by Charles François Gounod (1818–1893) is also a three-part art song, with lyrics by the French Romantic poet Eugène Tourneux. The poem paints a romantic and beautiful picture of spring, expressing the poet's joy at its arrival. Bizet's *"Chanson d'avril" ("April Song")*, written during the formative period of his style, is based on a poem by Louis Hyacinthe Bouihet from 1859.

The Chinese art song *"Qing Ping Yue"—"The Return of Spring"*—dates from the Song Dynasty and was composed by Chen Tianhe in 1931. *"Spring Reflections,"* on the other hand, is a work by Huang Zhi, composed in 1932 to a text by Wei Hanzhang.

By reading poetry, the composers derived aesthetic pleasure; they highly valued the content and the "flavor" of the poems' sound. They immersed themselves in the mood of every poetic phrase they read, in its emotions and overall atmosphere, striving to ensure that genuine feelings were reflected in the music, thereby gaining new artistic life. They drew inspiration from the poems to create musical images and moods, combining characters, plot, and landscapes with the language of music, completely transforming the texts into a form of musical expression, and creating popular, short lyrical forms—art songs.

2.1.2. The Narrative Nature of Texts

As literature, with its restraint focused on verse meter and objective interpretation, transitions from the classical period to Romanticism, poetic genres and styles undergo immense changes, and poetry collections and epic poems become the preferred literary genres of poets. The emergence of these styles had a direct impact on the creation of art songs, expanding composers' traditional repertoire to include songs. Poetry collections and epic poems are long and diverse in their narrative and mood. Therefore, both in terms of form and content, they are highly expressive. Art songs and compositions based on epic poems have become widely used genres by composers from the 19th century to the present day.

The term “Lied” comes from German, and the Romantic genre is one of the defining characteristics of the *“Lied.”* The “Lied” is an established genre of song cycles that emerged during the height of Romanticism[32] . The “Lied,” meaning “flower wreath” in German, reveals its essence—specifically, a complete work consisting of several independent structures and songs interconnected by a narrative.

In the eyes of 19th-century Romantic composers, *the “Lied”* with a complete narrative was the best expression of deep thoughts and feelings, best reflecting the experiences of people of that time, and thus held profound social significance. This genre was first developed by Beethoven, and after composing the cycle *“An die ferne Geliebte” (“To the Distant Beloved”)*, Schubert continued and expanded upon it. Beethoven’s *“Lied”* was written with musical requirements in mind, without verifying whether the content and plot of the texts were closely linked. Schubert’s *“Lied,”* on the other hand, consists of a group of interconnected songs based on characters and plots that had a direct influence on the works of subsequent composers, forming the foundation of this genre.

Schubert’s *“Winterreise*,” based on a collection of poems by the German Romantic poet Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827), is a representative work in the field of art songs. Schubert was moved by the original text and wrote 24 coherent songs that make up *the “Lied.”* He specifically emphasized the character’s inner world, creating the image of a melancholic, lonely man, dissatisfied with reality and searching for an ideal realm in which to live. He leaves his familiar city and, betrayed by his beloved, wanders alone through an endless winter wasteland, gazing at the flags fluttering in the wind and the frozen rivers, listening to the sound of the wind and the bells of a horse-drawn carriage, avoiding the menacing dogs in the forest and the ominous raven. And on this journey, he experiences emotion and reflection. The indifference and melancholy of the human world, where compassion and mercy cannot be found, make one always an alienated wanderer. The protagonist wants to escape this world at all costs, the earthly crowd, seeking inner peace in a shimmering journey. The emotions throughout the work are diverse. Some express happy, warm memories, such as *“Der Lindenbaum” (“The Bodhi Tree*”) *“Frühlingstraum” (“Spring Dream”),* while others express passionate and carefree

[32] https://ml.mbd.baidu.com/r/1PXe2BhmZwc?f=cp&u=61fda804671d1e27 [accessed: 09/26/2025]

emotions, such as *"Die Post" ("The Carriage")* and *"Die Wetterfahne" ("The Weather Vane").* Those that radiate emotions associated with sadness and loss are *"Gute Nacht" ("Good Night")*• *"Die Krähe" ("The Raven")* or *"Auf dem Fluss" ("On the River")*. We must also not forget those that express rebellion and struggle in an emotional battle, such as *"Der stürmische Morgen" ("The Stormy Morning").*

The emotional music of Richard Strauss in the work "Four Last Songs" creates an atmosphere of death and disappointment throughout. Each of the four songs—*"Spring" ("Frühling"), "September" ("September"), "Going to Sleep" ("Beim Schlafengehen"*) and *"At Dusk" ("Im Abendrot")*—expresses a longing for happy love, a lament over transience, the gradual quieting of the soul, and an old man's farewell. Virtually all of Richard Strauss's skills and achievements in writing works for soprano are encapsulated in these four final, emotionally charged songs.

2.1.3. The Lyricism of the Texts

From a literary perspective, poetry expresses emotions and shapes images through language. Flat poetry becomes three-dimensional through the dynamic changes of the music, giving it expressiveness. Art song texts, due to aesthetic requirements, require a unique poetic mood and harmony of sounds that can inspire composers to create. Therefore, art song texts are the foundation for creating perfect musical images.

As a genre possessing a poetic atmosphere and content, the expression of art songs stems primarily from the emotional tone of the poetry. Lyric poetry, by expressing the emotions of characters, revealing their personalities, and sketching their images, possesses its own artistic depth. The poetic mood of art songs deeply captures the essence of works of art.

One example is Schubert's art song *"In Spring" ("Im Frühling"),* composed based on *the* poem *"Poetic Diary"* by the German Romantic poet Ernst Schulze*,* written between June 29, 1813, and February 17, 1817.

Excerpt from the song:

"Still sitz ich an des Hügels Hang,"— "I sit quietly on the hillside,"
"Der Himmel ist so klar," – "The sky is so clear,"
"Das Lüftchen spielt im grünen Tal," – A gentle breeze plays in the green valley,
„wo ich beim ersten Frühlingsgmtrahl" "Where, I was during the first ray of spring,"

„Einst Ach so glücklich war,, "Once, oh, how happy I was."

This is a standard narrative text in which the author uses elements such as time, place, and characters. Broadly speaking, texts of this kind refer to their content, which, although not primarily focused on storytelling, has a certain narrative character. Such texts are often treated as lyrical, associated with feelings characteristic of family, love, etc. Although they do not contain all narrative elements, they have other key aspects, such as characters and events.

Excerpt from the work:

"Wo ich an ihrer Seite ging" — I walked past the place where she was,
"So traulich und so nah," — so trustingly, so close,
"Und tief im dunkeln Felsenquell" — deep in the dark depths of the rocky spring
"Den schönen Himmel blau und hell," — the beautiful, bright, blue sky,
"Und sie im himmel sah " — and I saw her in the heaven

The author's longing for his beloved and his dreams of beautiful love are evident here.

Excerpt from the poem:

"Es wandeln nur sich Will und Wahn," — Only will and delusion change,
"Es wechseln Lust und Streit," — joy and strife alternate,
"Vorüber flieht der Liebe Glück," — the happiness of love has simply vanished,
"Und nur die liebe Bleibt żurück," —and only love remains behind
"Die Lieb' und ach, das Leid!" — love and, oh, the pain!

This part of the song's lyrics expresses the author's longing for his beloved, taking it to the extreme. All these beautiful moments are merely his fantasy. *"In Spring"* is an artistic song that uses beautiful spring landscapes to express the author's feelings. It reminds him of his beloved. At the beginning of the text, the protagonist sits on a hill, admiring the spring flowers and beautiful views. He is very happy; everything is so beautiful. It is only at the end of the passage that we realize that it was all just his fantasy. His beloved is not nearby; only the character's lonely *"I"* remains. One can feel the author's deep longing for his beloved and the pain caused by her absence.

In 1826, Schubert composed the song *"In Spring"* to a poem by the German poet Ernst Schulze. Interestingly, both the poet and the composer had similar emotional experiences. It was

precisely their shared empathy and telepathic understanding that allowed them to create this magnificent composition, which expresses longing for a beloved, dreams of growing old together with her, and ultimately the disappointment stemming from the inability to spend one's entire life with her. This poem paints romantic scenes full of springtime atmosphere, expressing the poet's and Schubert's longing to spend their lives with their beloved, as well as their sadness and regret over their separation.

2.1.4. The mood of the lyrics

The concept of poetic mood is the unity of emotion and landscape, thought and setting, arising from the harmonious fusion of objective reality—life and nature—with subjective experiences—thoughts and feelings. It is the result of a practice synthesized in accordance with the principles of artistic creation. Chinese aesthetics has always emphasized that emotions are the inner life of art, viewing poetic mood as the profound beauty of art. Therefore, mood in poetry, together with inspiration, is the soul of poetic creation.

For example*, "May Song"* was written in 1771, when Goethe was 22 years old. In the spring of 1770, he left bustling Leipzig, set aside his law books, and, together with his beloved Friederike Brion, wandered through the sunlit fields. The vast sky and earth, and their passionate love, stirred in the poet an irrepressible urge to create, and from the heart he composed *"May Song*." The opening section of the poem describes the natural landscape of Sessenheim, while the latter part focuses on the poet's feelings. These bright spring landscapes are seen through the eyes of a lover; everything is enveloped in pure love. Love blossoms in a rural setting, which lends it boundless springtime charm. Feelings and landscape harmonize with one another. The landscape is made more beautiful by the feelings, and the feelings become more intense thanks to the landscape.

The poet merges *the "I"* with nature, expressing the theme of love. The poem's description is exceptionally picturesque. Goethe creates a vivid and beautiful atmosphere through natural landscapes. The sun, fields, flowers—all these elements in Goethe's work are full of life; they shine, smile, and grow. In the first stanza*,* Goethe writes, "How the sun shines!" *("Wie glänzt die Sonne!"),* which shows the protagonist's delight in the beauty of nature. The author later expresses this same fascination directly. The blooming flowers correspond to the motif of "May Song"—"Flowers bloom/From every branch" *("Es dringen Blüten/Aus jedem Zweig"),* which symbolizes the arrival of spring. The protagonist in the poem rejoices in this. The poet continues to describe this joy until the third stanza, where he extols love. Although he

interweaves descriptions of love and nature, this technique binds love and nature even more closely, without giving the impression of jumping between topics. In the sixth stanza, the poet confesses his feelings to his beloved, and his happiness grows stronger and stronger until the end of the poem, where he expresses his hope for love with the words "Be eternally happy, as you love me" *("Sei ewig glücklich, wie du mich liebst").*

A song based on this poem was later composed by Beethoven. The piece itself is a spring song full of life. The poet perfectly captured the clash between nature and the soul, using his delight in spring to express his feelings. Admiration and fascination are key features of this poem. The word "how" ("wie") is used repeatedly in the poem, forming part of an exclamatory sentence. Furthermore, there are nine exclamatory sentences beginning with "how," shifting from delight in nature to fascination with love and the beloved.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) was one of the greatest and most important German poets. His youth coincided with the "Storm and Stress" period *("Sturm und Drang"),* and many of his famous works were written during this time. Descriptions of nature during this period, in contrast to the rationality and coolness of the Enlightenment, contained more personal emotion, which manifested itself through the "interweaving of feelings into the landscape." In his poems, in addition to descriptions of nature, Goethe often used symbolism, linking feelings to the landscape to emphasize inner experiences

2.2. The Musicality of European and Chinese Art Songs with a Spring Theme

2.2.1. Legibility of Texts

We believe that the fundamental principles of poetry have remained unchanged for millennia; regardless of how the form and content of poetry have evolved, or how creators have explored, experimented, and sought novelty and uniqueness, the principles of poetry remain constant—conciseness of words, attention to melody, and the creation of mood. Language is both the vehicle of poetry and its content, as well as the form of lyrical expression. Therefore, we should remember that poetry is primarily meant to be recited, sung, and listened to; in short, it is an oral form and not meant to be viewed. Admiration through viewing emerged with the invention of writing, serving the purpose of preservation and memorization. Language is for speaking, and writing is for viewing. This requires us, when creating poetry, to pay special attention to whether it is pleasing to the ear, so that it can support reading and listening, speaking and singing—not viewing. Nevertheless, we continue to promote the readability of poetry; we

encourage poets to pay attention to the special role of sounds in the language of poetry, so that it is more readable and its musical expression more vivid.

When creating poetry, a poet should consciously manage the tempo of the rhythm, the modulation of tone, and the harmony of rhymes. These elements in sound directly and intensely express the emotional state of the poetry, fully engaging various senses, which makes the poetry even more effective. For example, when we recite *the* poem *"Spring Night and Rain"* by Du Fu of the Tang Dynasty, which goes as follows: "The good rain knows its time when spring arrives, silently creeping in with the night wind, moistening all things in silence," we naturally slow down the pace while reading; the rhythm slows, and a sad and melancholic mood emerges in the sound. If we use repetitions, such as "rustles, rustles" or "thump, thump, thump," the pace naturally quickens, the rhythm becomes faster, which more easily conveys a solemn and dynamic effect.

In German, however, both in poetry and in song lyrics, the writing style is closer to spoken language, which does not mean it lacks literary quality or imagery. The lyrics for "Voices of Spring" *("Frühlingsstimmen-Walzer")* were written by the Gdańsk-born Prussian playwright and composer Richard Genée (1823–1895). Here is a typical excerpt in which we analyze the meter and counterpoint in the text:

"der Tau wind weht so lau" – A light breeze gently stirs the dewdrops on the leaves of the trees.
"sein wonniger milder Hauch belebt" – An atmosphere of warmth and joy spreads everywhere.
"und küßt das Feld, die Au." – A joyful atmosphere envelops the entire land like a kiss.

In the above excerpt, the first and third lines rhyme *("lau" and "Au")*, which is called a cross rhyme, with a strong emphasis on rhythm. Each phrase begins and ends in a connected manner. Reading the entire text and analyzing its character and rules facilitates memorization and a deeper understanding of the literary mood. The language of song lyrics is closely tied to speech. The language of sung poetry permeates the structural features of the national language, its rhythm, and melody. When learning artistic songs, we should carefully analyze the languages of European nations and the linguistic habits of our own, because the greater the linguistic differences between nations, the more different their styles are. The smaller the differences, the closer the styles are. In the aesthetics of sung poetry (song lyrics), a fundamental problem can be observed: the quality of the selected texts directly influences the artistic quality and aesthetic value of the musical works.

2.2.2. The Singability of Texts

Lu Xun once said: “Poetry must have form; it must be easy to remember, easy to understand, easy to sing, and melodious...”[33] . These words suggest that poetry should not only be pleasing to the ear and understandable, but it must also be singable.

Folk songs from ancient times were passed down and spread orally, so naturally they were sung. The first Chinese anthology of poetry, the "Book of Songs," is a record of folk songs passed down orally, and the oldest European form of poetry is *"Homer's Epics*,*"* comprising *the "Odyssey"* and *the "Iliad*,*"* each consisting of 24 books. These works were naturally sung. Songs, on the other hand, are more natural and free-flowing, closer to speech; they have a distinct rhythm and beautiful melody, which makes them even more singable. Rhythm, melody, and text structure are key elements of a text's singability, influencing the rhythm, melodic lines, tension, and form of the piece. Therefore, the literary quality of the text must be combined with its musicality. The text, as the foundation of the musical image, is sung poetry. Outstanding lyricists often draw upon their aesthetic sensibilities, artistic imagination, and capacity for artistic synthesis to better capture the characteristics of lyrical music, focusing on the singability of images, endowing them with qualities that allow emotions to be expressed through song, and creating emotionally rich images that inspire composers to create moving melodies.

For example, the lyrics of art songs such as *“O primavera”* by Pier Adolfo Tirindelli, *“Chanson de Printemps”* by Charles Gounod, and *“Chanson d'avril”* by Georges Bizet are drawn from the poetry of well-known poets. The close relationship between “words and music” stems from the fact that poetry itself possesses a certain musicality, which manifests itself in “rhymes” and “logical accents”[34] . The greatness of composers lies in their use of—or striving for—a logical and rigorous structure to unite melody and poetry in a coherent form and logic.

The uniqueness of poetic rhythm enhances the beauty of poetry, while simultaneously influencing composers' creation of melodies. An analysis of poetry shows that music and language form the most beautiful human expression, intertwining with one another and being inextricably linked. Different languages have their own distinctive features, which create differences between them, and different languages generate different melodies, different singing techniques, and styles. When language is transformed into more musical texts, it becomes a tool

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[33] https://ml.mbd.baidu.com/r/1PXegr1bxle?f=cp&u=580809289200a6b5 [accessed: 09/29/2025]

[34]Xu, Zhaoren. *“On the Characteristics of Art Songs and the Features of German-Austrian Art Songs” [*J]. Yuefu Xinsheng (Journal of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music), 2005, no. 2, pp. 43–47.

for expressing thoughts and feelings, a fundamental means of expressing intentions, sentiments, and emotions.

2.2.3. Rhythm of Texts

The sentence structure of songs and poems is the basic unit that forms the overall structure of songs and poems (hereinafter referred to as lyrics). These texts have a distinct rhythm, and their structure and syllable arrangement often reflect the specific rhythm of the language. The rhythm of the text is expressed through sentence structure and various ways of combining words. Words contain accents that form syllables, and these in turn form the basic units of the language's rhythm.

Basic sentence forms in the texts of Chinese art songs.

There is no fixed format for the sentence structure of song lyrics in contemporary art. Metrical poems, such as quatrains and rhyming verses, as well as lyrics and melodies from the Tang Dynasty, have become a source of inspiration for Chinese songwriters. In particular, the emergence in modern times of poems and lyrics with long and short lines has enabled the creation of texts in free formats and diverse rhythms, and has also laid the foundation for contemporary art[35] . Variations in the tempo of a piece offer great possibilities.

The lyrics of contemporary art songs have a variable number of syllables per line, most often ranging from five to eleven. Lines with a single syllable or more than thirteen syllables are rare. Differences in line length create distinctive rhythms in song lyrics. By analyzing the structure of the lines and reading them aloud, we can understand their rhythmic characteristics.

Uniform line structures:

Such texts often feature lines of five or seven syllables, utilizing traditional Chinese poetic forms such as "七言" (*"qiyan"* – "seven-syllable") and "五言" (*"wuyan"* – "five-syllable").

An example of five-syllable verses is the fifth movement of Gustav Mahler's *"Song of the Earth,"* whose text is Li Bai's poem *"Spring Reflections of a Drunkard*." Mahler faithfully adhered to the German translation of the original.

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[35] The Tang Dynasty was an ancient dynasty in China. Tang quatrains are a genre of Han ethnic group poetry, typically consisting of "five-character" and "seven-character" lines, also known as "five-character quatrains" and "seven-character quatrains."

“Life is like a great dream; why toil in this world?

所以终日醉，颓然卧前楹，- *That is why I drink all day, lying carefree before the column*,

觉来盼庭前，一鸟花间鸣。- *When I wake, I look out at the courtyard, where a bird sings among the flowers.*

I *ask, what season is this? The spring breeze speaks through the nightingale.*
Moved by this, I want to sigh, but I reach for the wine and drink again.
I sing aloud, awaiting the full moon; when the song ends, I have forgotten all.

In modern Chinese art song lyrics, the use of mixed line lengths has become a major trend. Therefore, line structures should be adapted to the song’s style, content, and emotion to best convey the work’s theme.

Artistic Treatment of Song **Lyrics**

Linguistic rhythm often forms the basis of musical rhythm in songwriting. The rhythmicity of verses transcends the limitations of language itself, leading to a more varied and artistically transformed rhythm. If a song’s lyrics have uniform yet varied verses, with a strong rhythm and melodiousness, they can better capture musical imagery and convey the song’s content.

Summary of Chapter Two

1. The heart of an art song lies in the perfect fusion of poetry and music. By combining literature and music, a new art form is created, where song lyrics are often based on poems by renowned poets, with a strong emphasis on literary quality and the expression of the human inner world.

2. The connection between lyrics and music in art songs gives them a deeper emotional expression, allowing for the articulation of individual, profound feelings. The diverse poetic styles of various nations provide the content for art songs, and the task of composers is to musically express poetic imagery that is difficult to capture.

3. A good song evokes a strong emotional resonance in poets and composers, inspiring them to create and arrange music that highlights the emotions, tension, and rhythm contained in the lyrics.

Chapter 3. A Comparison of Imagery in European and Chinese Art Songs with a Spring Theme

The reason why art song reached its peak in the 19th century in Germany, Austria, France, and Russia, and flourished in the 20th century in Europe, America, and Asia, is its inseparable connection with the development of modern poetry. Art songs emerged from this foundation, which is why the standards for their lyrics are very high.

An art song is a fusion of poetry and music. Poetry is regarded as a treasure and the highest expression of a nation's culture, while also being the result of the cultural and historical context of the era. Chinese and Western poetry are entirely different, reflecting, respectively, the cultural, artistic, aesthetic, and literary achievements of both civilizations. A comparison of Chinese and Western poetry is objectively necessary for cultural exchange and subjectively required for the study and development of Chinese poetry.

Ancient Chinese poetry has always attracted the world's attention with its concise language and beautiful imagery, and Western poetry has also dazzled. We can discover many immortal works among the vast number of poetic compositions. The term "image" in poetry became popular in the West beginning in the 18th century with the spread of the theory of imagination. Lewis, in his work **Images of Poetry**, stated that an image "is a picture painted with words," and "an entire poem can be a single image composed of many images"[36] . British critic Spurgeon, in *"Shakespeare's Images and Their Meaning,"* defines an image as: "any imagined picture represented in any manner."

The modern transformation of ancient Chinese poetry was largely the result of the influence of Western concepts and forms of poetry. However, the tradition of ancient Chinese poetry had a profound influence on its modern counterpart. The conscious drawing upon tradition and its potential influence have created a complex legacy of ancient and modern Chinese poetry, where, in the process of embracing tradition, contemporary poets clearly demonstrate their individual creativity. This is particularly evident in poetic imagery. Imagery is a unique way of presenting poetry, distinguishing it from other literary forms. The poet's creative inspiration and their life experiences and existence are concentrated in imagery, and

[36] Liu Fang, *"A Study of the Language of Poetic Imagery*." [D] Shanghai International Studies University. p. 201.

poets and readers communicate primarily through imagery, conveying emotions and establishing a spiritual connection.

Chinese and Western poets share common traits in the creation of imagery. First and foremost, a closeness to and affinity with nature. The fusion of the poet's soul with images of nature is the most distinctive common feature of poetic imagery from both ancient and modern times, deeply rooted in traditional cultural psychological complexes. These characteristics can be observed in poetry featuring spring motifs.

3.1. A Comparison of the Use of Spring Imagery in Chinese and European Poetry

3.1.1. Linguistic style: the conciseness of Chinese versus the linguistic richness of European poetry

Classical Chinese poetry, based on the number of syllables per line, takes the forms of four-syllable, five-syllable, seven-syllable, and mixed forms.

Because China has been an agricultural country since the dawn of time, it has deep ties to nature. Changes in nature easily resonate with the emotions and state of mind of poets, which is why ancient poets were extremely sensitive to the changing seasons. Themes such as longing for spring, sadness over the passing of time, and the melancholy of autumn are common motifs in ancient Chinese poetry. The use of natural imagery in ancient Chinese poetry is masterful, as it subtly conveys complex emotions while offering intricate and unforgettable aesthetic experiences. For example, in the ancient poetry of Meng Haoran from the Tang Dynasty, this is perfectly evident in the poem *"Spring Morning*": "春眠不觉晓，处处闻啼鸟。夜来风雨声，花落知多少。" - *Spring sleep knows no dawn; everywhere birds are heard singing. Last night, the sound of wind and rain could be heard—how many flowers have fallen?*

The entire poem consists of four lines and employs vivid imagery and concise language. Through the description of a spring afternoon, a nighttime storm, and falling flowers, the poet effectively conveys his feelings and reflections.

When comparing ancient Chinese poetry with the poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, it is clear that the West promoted anthropocentrism; from the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, who said "know thyself," through the humanistic ideas of the Renaissance, to the rise of Romanticism at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, where Romantics championed the

slogan “return to nature”[37] . The development of nature poetry and the use of natural imagery in Western poetry began to gradually flourish.

Western poetry is distinguished by its flowery language and a greater striving for the liberation of the individual. This is evident in *the* poem *“May Song” by the* German poet Goethe:

“Wie herrlich leuchtet mir die Natur! - „ *How wonderfully nature shines upon me!"*
„Wie glänzt die Sonne! Wie lacht die Flur! - „ *How the sun shines! How the field laughs!"*
„es drunken Blüten aus jedem Zweig” -„it’s drunken blossom from every branch",
„und tausebd Stimmen aus dem gesträuch” –„And *a thousand* voices from the bushes,"
„und freud und wonnel". „and joy and delight.”

The language is direct and emotionally intense. Westerners, prone to extolling the efficiency of production brought about by the Industrial Revolution or the greatness of God’s creation of humankind, often express their feelings in a flowery and open manner. In contrast, Confucian culture, developed within an agricultural civilization and an authoritarian system, shaped the Chinese way of expressing emotions to be more restrained and veiled. The Chinese prefer to express their feelings and thoughts through images of nature, where the expression is limited but the meaning is infinite.

3.1.2. Characteristics of styles depicting spring in China and Europe: subtlety versus directness

The hidden beauty of ancient Chinese poetry is a unique and fascinating aspect of Chinese culture that reflects the wisdom and aesthetic aspirations of the people of old. Hidden beauty is a form of expression that, through concise, restrained, and subtle means, lends poetry depth and an unforgettable impact.

Above all, hidden beauty manifests itself in the evocative power of imagery. Ancient poetry often uses concrete images to express abstract feelings and thoughts, and these images frequently carry rich symbolic meaning.

[37]https://mq.mbd.baidu.com/r/1QhgX4Xcwko?f=cp&u=c9b2569005720204 [accessed: 10/5/2025]

For example, in Du Fu's poem *"Spring Reflections,"* the image is one of sorrow:

"国破山河在，城春草木深。感时花溅泪，恨别鸟惊心。" - *The country has fallen, yet the mountains and rivers remain; in spring, the city is overgrown with grass and trees. Flowers weep over the fate of the times, and birds tremble at the thought of parting.*

Using concise language, he depicts a scene of a devastated country and lush vegetation, while simultaneously expressing the poet's reflections on the political situation and his inner pain. The theme of the poem *"Spring Reflections"* is a country in ruins, yet the mountains and rivers endure despite everything. The once-flourishing capital of Chang'an has now become a desolate city overgrown with grass. The sight of blooming spring flowers brings tears to the eyes, and the sound of birdsong intensifies the feeling of sadness. A characteristic feature of Chinese poetry is the expression of emotions through images of nature. Throughout the poem, the poet does not explicitly express his sadness or mention the fall of Chang'an and the destruction of the country, but through the contrasting images of "the fall of the country" and "spring in the city," he creates a powerful contrast. *"Spring in the city"* refers to the abundance of flowers and trees in spring, to a bright and beautiful landscape, but because of the "fall of the country," the capital has decayed and lost its springtime splendor, leaving only ruins. This mode of expression through suggestion adds depth and layers to the poetry.

European poetry, on the other hand, is characterized by directness. Its imagery focuses on the pursuit of unity within the opposition between subject and object. European literature has been influenced by Plato's theory of the "world of ideas" and Aristotle's "universal logical structure"[38] . Westerners believe that man is a separate entity distinct from nature, dividing self-awareness and lack of awareness into two separate elements, emphasizing that everything in the external world can be explained through the prism of the self. For Westerners, object and subject, matter and spirit are mutually opposed. The 18th and 19th centuries, the Romantic period in Europe, marked another significant era in the history of European literature, spanning from the late 18th to the early 19th century. It emphasized emotion and imagination, promoted the pursuit of freedom and individuality, which made European poetry more free and direct,

[38] Liu Congxin, Liu Zhengfu, *"A History of European Vocal Music."* [M] China Youth Press. 1999, p. 22.

focusing on the individual's inner emotions and reflections. An example is the poetry of the French writer Louis Bouilhet:

"Viens partons! Au matin la source est plus limpide; - *Come, let's go! In the morning the spring is clearer;*
„N'attendons pas du jour les brûlantes chaleurs, "- *Let's not wait for the scorching heat of the day,*
„Je veux mouiller mes pieds dąs la rosée humide" –I want *to dip* my feet in the *damp dew,*
„et te parks d'amour sour les poiries en fleurs!"And talk *to you of love* beneath the *blossoming pear trees*!"

The poem is bold and direct, stating plainly: "I want to talk to you about love under the blossoming pear trees." European poetry is characterized by conciseness and lyricism, simplicity and concreteness, using language full of emotion to directly express thoughts and the social realities of the time.

Ancient Chinese poetry, on the other hand, is characterized by the harmonization of scene and emotion. Most poems use symbols, metaphors, and personifications to subtly weave the poet's emotions into images of nature.

3.1.3. A Comparison of Images of Spring in Chinese and European Poetry

The imagery of poetry has a characteristic feature of ambiguity. Human language arises within the culture of a given nation, and therefore contains diverse cultural and national elements. It is not only a tool for communicating thoughts but also a vehicle for national culture. Language cannot exist independently of culture; national customs must be reflected in it, which leads to differences in the cultural implications of language. Therefore, in the semantic system of a language, many words, in addition to their literal meanings, also contain meanings derived from basic conceptual meanings that embody the specific cultural characteristics of a given nation.

In Chinese and Western poetry, the seasons as a theme and image are almost always an essential element. In ancient poetry, a sense of seasonality is particularly prominent. In Western and Chinese poetry, cultural differences mean that European and Chinese poets have different perceptions of spring, despite shared national, cultural, psychological, and aesthetic interests. This natural affinity for imagery has a long history.

The Image of Spring in Chinese Poetry

1. **The image of joy.** In Chinese agrarian society, only rain can moisten the soil, making bountiful harvests possible; therefore, poetry describing spring rain conveys a deep joy at the arrival of spring.

Examples:

(1) "*Rain on spring streets like delicate silk; the grass seems far away, yet up close it cannot be seen."* — Han Yu (768–834).
(2) *"Good rain knows its time; it begins in spring. It enters the night quietly, moistening things gently and silently."* — Du Fu (712–770).

2. **An image of sorrow.**

Examples:

(1) *"In a small tower*, *I listened to the spring rain all night; tomorrow, apricot blossoms will be sold in the narrow alley*."—Lu You (1125–1210).

(2) "*It rains during Qingming; passersby on the road are weighed down by sorrow."*—Du Mu (803–852).

(3) "*Where is spring going? The road is lonely and impassable; if anyone knew where spring was, they would call it back to live with us."*—Huang Tingjian (1045–1105).

Spring rain moistens everything; thanks to it, flowers bloom, but at the same time, it can lead to their destruction. That is why spring rain is also a symbol of longing for spring and sadness over its passing.

3. **An image of parting**.

Of all human emotions, the feeling of parting and longing is the most disorienting and sorrowful. It is like spring rain, like mist, like smoke—delicate, floating in the air, and melancholic. In ancient literature, the feeling of parting is likened to spring rain, giving it a unique emotional depth.

Examples:

(1) "*Rain rustles behind the curtain; spring feelings fade away. Silk sheets cannot withstand the chill of the fifth watch. In my dream, I did not know I was a guest, momentarily reveling in happiness."* — Li Yu (937–978).

(2) "*Night rain falls on empty stairs; the morning lamp dims in the chamber of parting.*" — He Xun (472–519).

In Chinese poetry, spring rain symbolizes the joy of spring's arrival, the sorrow of spring's passing, and is an image of parting.

4. **An image of longing.**

Spring is a time of life's blossoming. Spring wild grasses grow and spread. They are delicate, like the unceasing human longing. Longing has life and is eternal, like the tiniest, most enduring, and most precious, endless wild grasses.

Examples:

(1*) "I wanted to seek out fragrant grasses, regretting that I must part with an old friend."* — Meng Haoran (689–740).
(2) *"Where in the world are there no fragrant grasses?"*—Su Shi (1037–1101).

Spring grasses represent an image of longing. In Tang and Song dynasty poetry, boundless fragrant grasses express many emotions associated with parting, nostalgia for the past, and remembrance.

The Image of Spring in European Poetry

The background of the Romantic literary era in the West differs from that associated with Chinese agrarian culture. Western Romantic poets emphasize feelings such as love, death, life, and nature, which is reflected in the moving works they left behind.

Nature is one of the most romantic themes in poetry. During the 18th and 19th centuries, from the Renaissance through Romanticism, the process of human liberation reached a new stage.

1. **The image of love.**

Examples:

(1) "Das Lüftchen spielt im grünen Tal"—"*A gentle breeze caresses the green valley,"*
"Wo ich beim ersten Frühlingsstrahl"—*"Here I am in the first rays of the spring sun,"*
„einst , ach so glücklich war" —"*Once,* oh *how happy I was."*
- By Konrad Friedrich Schulze (1789–1817)

(2) “N'attendons pas du jour les brûlantes chaleurs”—*“Let us not wait for the scorching heat of the day*,*”*
“N’attendons pas du jour les brûlanyes chaleurs ,” — “*I want to dip my feet in the damp dew,”*
“Je veux mouiller med pieds dans la rosée humide!” — “*And talk to you of love beneath the blossoming pear trees!”*
- Louis Bouilhet (1821–1869)

(3) “Non senti tu ne l’aria”— *“Can’t you feel yet,”*

”

„il Profumo Che spande primavera"– “the scent of *spring wafting through the air?”*

“Non senti tu ne l’anima″ — *“Don’t you hear,”*

„il spin de nova vice lusinghiera" —“the spin of the new flattering vice"
„È l’a prime !è la station d’amore!" — “*It is* April*!* It is the season *of* love*!”*
“Deh! vieni, o mia gentil.” — *“Oh, come, my beloved.”*
- Rocc Emanuele Pagliara (1856–1914)

(4) “Voici donc les longs jours,” — *“Long days, bright sun,”*
„ lumière ,amour délre!—“*light, love, madness!”*
“Voici le printemps!”—*“Here is spring!”*
- Victor Hugo (1802–1885)

Winter in Europe is cold and long, while the spring air is warm and pleasant, bringing warmth and romance after a period of cold. European poets, romantic by nature, find inspiration in spring. Spring symbolizes love, as in the following poem: *“Et te parler d'amour sous les poiriers en fleurs!”* ("*And to talk to you of love beneath the blossoming pear trees!").*

2. An image of freedom.

Examples:

(1) “Der Frühling in holder Pracht erwacht,” — “Spring awakens in enchanting splendor,”
“Ah, all suffering may come to an end,” — “*all suffering has come to an end*,*”*
“All sorrow has *fled far away!”*
- Richard Geneé (1832–1899)

(2) “Voici le printemps ! mars, avril au doux sourire.” — *“Here is spring! March and April with a sweet smile.”*
- Victor Hugo (1802–1855)

(3) “L’arrivée de monsieur Printemps.” — *“The arrival of Mr. Spring.”*
“Monsieur Hiver n’est plus le roi,” — *“Mr. Winter is no longer king,”*
Dame Nature repress sea droits "—“*Mother Nature reclaims her rights*.”
“Les fleurs appareissent fans led champs ,” — “*Flowers appear in the fields,”*
“pour salute monsieur printemps” — “*To greet Mr. Spring.”*
- Karine Persillet

Love and freedom are the most common themes in European poetry. The Renaissance, humanism, and the pursuit of freedom and equality are reflected in the works of poets who express these feelings through descriptions of nature. Spring symbolizes renewal and rebirth.

3. The image of nature’s beauty.

Examples:
(1) “Giunt’ è la Primavera efestosetti,” — “*The goddess of spring descends to earth,”*
“La sanlutan gl’augei con lie to canto,” — *“The birds’ chirping can be heard in the forest,”*
“E I go to allo spiral de ’zeffiretti” — “*A gentle breeze softly caresses the face,”*
“con dolecę mormorio scorpion in tanto” — *“with a sweet murmur they flow in so much”*
- Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)

(2),,) „Puisque mai tout en fleurs dans les prés nous réclame’’, —“*The May meadows*, *full of flowers*, *call to us,”*
“Viens ! ne te lasse pas de mêler à ton âme” — “*Come! Do not tire of blending with your soul,”*
“ La campagne, les bois, les ombrages charmants’— “*With the countryside, the woods, the charming shadows of the trees,”*
“Les larges clairs de lune au bord des flots dormants,,” — “*The broad moonlight on the edge of the sleeping waves,”*
„Le sentier qui finit où le chemin commence"–The path that ends where the road begins*.”*
- Victor Hugo (1802–1885)

European poets have a particular fondness for describing and extolling nature. They often place their characters in peaceful, natural surroundings. In European literature, nature and history hold deep significance; they are perceived as mysterious, sacred, and beautiful forces.

Poets emphasize the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature, and spring, being a beautiful season full of blooming flowers and singing birds, provides the perfect subject for poetic descriptions and the expression of feelings.

Summary of Chapter Three

In the above chapter, classic poems from both China and Europe have been selected. Poetry is a form of crystallization of national culture. The author of this dissertation chose ancient Chinese poetry (from ancient times to the outbreak of the Opium War in 1840) for discussion. In 1840, other cultures were not yet present in China, so ancient Chinese poetry best represents the image of Chinese culture. From Europe, on the other hand, poems by famous poets from various countries were selected, analyzed, and compared. This comparison is as follows:

1. Every literary form, without exception, is a combination of the subject (the writer's subjective thoughts and feelings) and the object (objective nature or social life). Poetry, however, is the literary form with the strongest subjectivity and the most vivid expression of subjective traits. Every work, including narrative ones such as the novel or drama, must express the author's feelings. It can be said that without feelings or passion, art cannot be created. Poetry, however, is the literary form richest in passion and emotion. Even epic poetry possesses lyrical qualities.

2. In poetry, an image is an expression of certain thoughts and feelings that, through figurative language, suggests and leads the reader from the world of the senses to a world where emotions and reason intertwine. Therefore, every image contains a certain emotional hue, and such a subjective factor is the result of the poet's "world of life." As Gadamer said: "Aesthetic experience always involves the experience of a certain infinite whole"[39] . Therefore, imagery is not only individual to the poet but also reflects the cultural background. The different philosophies and cultural contexts of the East and West determine the distinct characteristics of ancient Chinese imagery-based poetry and modern Western imagery-based poetry.

3. In ancient Chinese poetry and artistic songs, writers often use spring rain to express joy at the arrival of spring, fallen flowers to express sadness at the passing of spring, spring grass and red beans to express longing, willows to express farewell, cuckoos to express sadness, and swallows to express love. Western poetry directly expresses feelings, tending to emphasize the environment, focusing on depiction and static beauty, and skillfully using imagery to convey

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[39] Liu Fang, *"The Language of Poetic Images."* [D], Shanghai International Studies University, 2007, p. 165

emotions. In the lyrics of European art songs, flowers are often used to express a woman's beauty, roses as a metaphor for a European lady, natural landscapes to express hope, and clouds and birds to express longing and love. In European poetry, spring can signify freedom, love, and hope.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Representative Chinese and European Art Songs on the Theme of Spring

4.1. Analysis of Selected Chinese Artistic Works on the Theme of Spring

4.1.1. "When will the spring flowers bloom and the autumn moon shine?" ("Chun hua qiu yue he shi Liao?")

Background of the work

The poem *"When will the spring flowers bloom and the autumn moon shine?"* was written by Emperor Li Yu of the Southern Tang (937–978) during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. It was his final work—filled with sorrow and regret. The author compares the eternity of nature with the fragility of human life to express his despair over the fall of his country. The language of the poem is pure, beautiful, and precise. It begins with a question and ends with an answer—from a question to the heavens, through a question to the people, to a question to oneself. Despite its somber atmosphere, the piece has a melodic tone and a beautiful, fluid composition, which evokes deep emotions in the reader.

Zhou Jiasheng (b. 1965) is a renowned Chinese pianist and composer. Although he has composed few works, each one is refined and of high quality.

This chapter analyzes three of his art songs based on poetry from the Tang and Song dynasties[40] . These songs have beautiful melodies and varied styles—the author analyzes their musical characteristics and performance style.

The three songs are: *"Yu Meiren – When Will the Spring Flowers Bloom and the Autumn Moon Shine?"*, *"Shui Diao Ge Tou – When Will the Bright Moon Appear Again?",* and *"Zhe Gu Tian – I Fear Our Meeting Was Only a Dream*." All the lyrics were written by famous figures from the Tang and Song dynasties.

[40] The *"Tang"* and *"Song"* periods refer to two important dynasties in Chinese history: the "Tang" dynasty (618–907) and the "Song" dynasty (960–1279). This is the approximate period between these two reigns.

The first, "Yu Meiren," was written by Emperor Li Yu[41] after the loss of his country—in the text, he sincerely expresses his sadness and longing for the past.

The second, *"Shui Diao Ge Tou,"* is a poem by Su Shi[42] , a renowned poet of the heroic school from the Song Dynasty. He writes about his longing for his brother in a beautiful and imaginative way, with a touch of romanticism.

The third, "Zhe Gu Tian," was written by Yan Jidao[43] , a poet known for his delicate and emotional texts. He describes a meeting with his beloved, longing, and a reunion. The language of the poem is subtle and emotional, which lends it sincerity and sadness

Zhou Jiasheng's song *"Yu Meiren"—"When Spring Flowers Bloom and the Autumn Moon Shines"*—is based on the traditional Chinese pentatonic scale in the key of B-flat gong[44] : **bE – mi – fa – sol – la – do – mi**, and then transitions to the seven-note yu scale in the key of C[45] : **do – re – mi – fa – sol – la – si – do**.

In terms of form, the piece has a simple two-part structure without repetitions. The tempo is rather relaxed. The entire piece consists of 38 measures and includes: an introduction, section A, a short transition (interlude), and section B.

The formal outline of the piece is as follows

A beginning		A		Interlude	B	
		a	b		c	d
1–3		4-11	12–17	18–21	22–25	26–39
Transition from the key **of B-flat gong** to **C yu** in the seven-note scale.						

1 Table. Structure of the song *"When Will the Spring Flowers Bloom and the Autumn Moon Shine?" ("Chun hua qiu yue he shi Liao?")*

[41] Li Yu (937–978), also known as Chongguang, was the last ruler of the Southern Tang. In history, he is known as Emperor Li (Li Houzhu). He was not only an emperor but also a highly talented poet.

[42] Su Shi (1037–1101), also known as Zizhan and Dongpo Jushi, was an outstanding writer, calligrapher, painter, and politician of the Northern Song Dynasty. He was one of *the "Eight Great Literary Masters of the Tang and Song Dynasties,"* and his literary achievements were exceptional.

[43] Yan Jidao (c. 1030 – c. 1106), known by the name Shuyuan, was a renowned poet of the Northern *Song* Dynasty. He came from an influential family. He specialized in writing about love and the feelings that bridge dreams and reality.
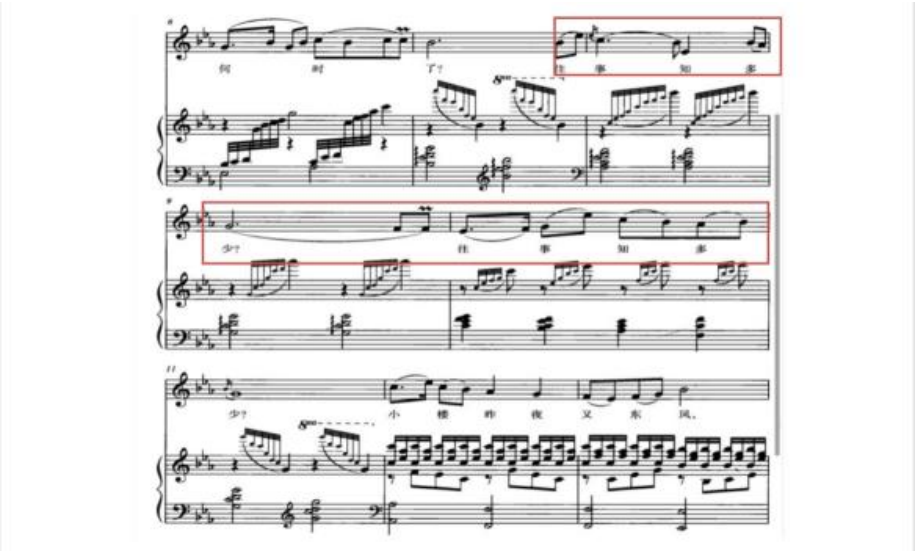
[44] Scale in the bE gong mode (traditional Chinese pentatonic scale): bE – mi – fa – sol – la – do – mi

[45] The C *yu* scale (Chinese seven-note *yu* scale):
do – re – mi – fa – sol – la – si – do

The piece begins with a three-bar introduction in a slow tempo (without a fixed meter). It starts with the dominant function and uses arpeggiated chords. A smooth, gentle melody prepares the entry of Section A. The introduction ends with a prolonged sixteenth note, echoing the beginning. The entire introduction contains octave leaps, which add artistic expression

Section A has a total of 14 measures and is divided into two phrases: phrase **a** has 8 measures, and phrase **b** has 6 measures. The structure is not regular—it is a closed form, but asymmetrical.

Phrase **a** consists of three smaller sections (4 + 2 + 2 measures). The accompaniment is based mainly on arpeggios that support the melodic line. The third section repeats the text from the second section. Throughout the phrase, there are large interval leaps that emphasize a sense of helplessness (see musical example 4–1).



Example1 /4 – 1/ Excerpt from the song *"When will the spring flowers bloom and the autumn moon shine?" ("Chun hua qiu yue he shi Liao?") measures 6–12*

Phrase b is divided into two parts (2 + 4 measures), following the rhythm of the verses in the text. The accompaniment is based mainly on chords (homophonic style), and the melody has a lower, more melancholic character.

The interlude is 4 measures long and uses block chords and a distinctive triplet tremolo. Though brief, this passage builds tension and prepares the transition to Part B.
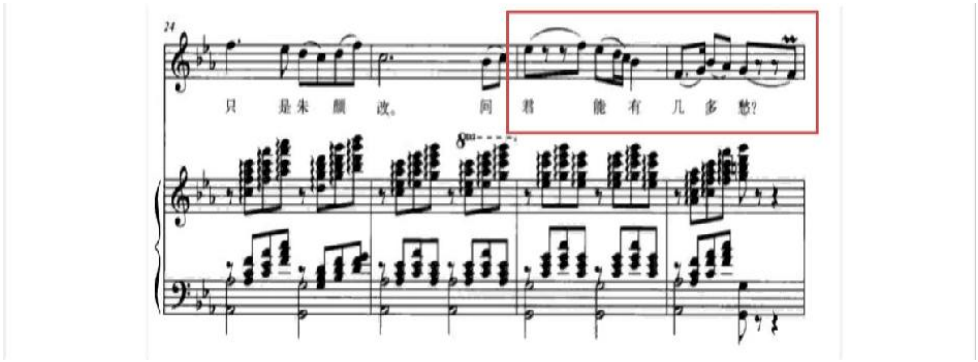
Part B consists of 17 measures and is divided into two phrases: phrase **c** has 4 measures, and phrase **d** has as many as 13 measures. It is an irregular, compact musical form.

Phrase **c** consists of two parts (2 + 2 measures), and the accompaniment is based on simple chords. The tempo is slightly faster.

In terms of emotional expression and vocal technique, strong accents not only help emphasize the meaning of the words but also support the singer's breathing. When performing the piece, accents can be used to convey the emotional tone of the text.

For example, in this song, the words "君 (jun)", "能 (neng)", "几 (ji)", and "愁 (chou)" fall on the strong beats of the measure and reflect the shifting emotions in the text.
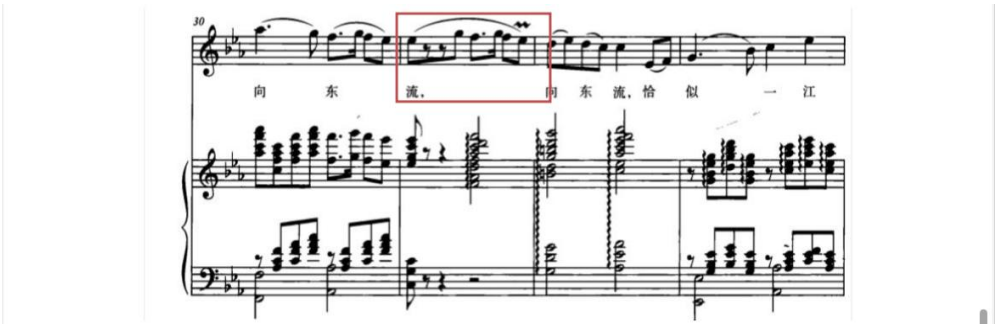
This phrase employs various rhythmic values, which gives it a strong linguistic tension. In particular, the presence of dotted notes affects breathing and the fluidity of the melody; therefore, when singing, one should pay attention to the smooth integration of rhythm and meter (see musical example 4–2).



Example2 /4–2/. Excerpt *from* the song *"When will the spring flowers bloom and the autumn moon shine?" ("Chun jiang hua ye he shi Liao?"), measures 24–27*

Pauses in the rhythm are also an important means of musical expression. Depending on their placement within a phrase, they can be classified into different types. In the piece under discussion, there are three pauses in the middle of a phrase—for example, in the line "问君能有几多愁" (*How much sorrow can a person have*?), the pauses after the words "君" (jun) and "愁" (chou) are a subtle way of expressing emotion and effectively convey the song's melancholic mood.

Since the pauses occur within the same phrase, one must carefully control one's emotions while singing to avoid disrupting the linguistic flow (see musical example 4–3).



Example3 /4–3/ Excerpt *from* the song *"When will the spring flowers bloom and the autumn moon shine?" ("Chun hua qiu yue he shi Liao?"), measures 30–33*

The word "流" (liu – "flows") contains a pause within the vowel sound. The singer should prepare the emotion in advance and maintain the continuity of the melodic line. The final phrase should be sung with a voice full of emotion—only then will the feeling of deep sadness be fully conveyed.

4.1.2. "Spring Moon Over the River" ("Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye")

Background of the Composition

This piece was primarily known as a classical composition for the pipa. It is considered one of the ten most beautiful pieces of traditional Chinese music. It was originally titled *"Sunset and the Sound of Drums*." The melody is long and atmospheric, and the entire piece has a deep, poetic atmosphere. It is a symbol of Chinese classical music.

In 1994, the renowned Chinese composer Xu Jingxin transformed this instrumental piece into an art song based on classical poetry. This was the first vocal version of the work. Xu Jingxin, as one of the most outstanding contemporary composers, had a huge influence on the development of Chinese vocal music. In this song, he combined traditional Chinese melody with vocal techniques from Western music, especially coloratura. This gave rise to a unique style that is now a classic example of Chinese art song.

Composer's Biography

Xu Jingxin (b. 1943) hails from Fengxian County in Shanghai. In 1960, he began his studies at the Composition Department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, graduating in 1967. He then worked as a composer at the Shanghai Film Studio. In 1988, he became the

artistic director and head of the Shanghai Film Orchestra. He is a first-class composer in China and has served as vice-chairman of the Shanghai Musicians' Association and as a member of national arts organizations. He currently serves as an advisor to the Shanghai Musicians' Association.

Xu Jingxin has composed music for over 80 films and more than 150 television series. His well-known works include: *"The Unforgettable Battle," "The Smile of a Worried Man," and "Little Street and Sunrise."*

Musical analysis and performance style guidelines:

"Spring Moon Over the River" is a piece with a repetitive form, built on a simplified three-part structure (A–B–A). It was composed in the key of C gong[46]

Basic structure	Introduction	A		B			A'	
Secondary structure		a	b	c	d	e	a'	b'
Opening and closing sections	1–12	13–25	26–38	39–56	57–104	105–140	141–150	151–166
key	Key of C major							

2 Table. Structure of the song "Spring Moon over the River" ("Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye")

(1) Analysis of the Introduction

Measures 1–12, slow tempo (no fixed meter). The introduction uses piano and human voice to imitate the sounds of a drum and *the* "Xiao" flute. This creates a calm and mysterious atmosphere of a nighttime riverside landscape. Frequent short ornamental notes (grace notes) add the effect of flickering light on the water. The last 4 measures of the introduction introduce new material and can be regarded as a preparation for Part A—both in the accompaniment and the harmony. The introduction plays an important role in setting the mood and introducing the main theme of the piece.

(2) Analysis of Part A

[46] i.e., C major in the traditional Chinese scale

Measures 13–38, moderate and serious tempo. Part A is divided into two sections:

– The first (bars 13–25): based on a pentatonic scale in the key of D. This is the main vocal melody. The technique of "closing a phrase at the beginning of the next" is used here (one motif connects to the next like a tail to a head), symbolizing the continuous flow of a river. In four short phrases, a poetic image of a moonlit night by the water is created. The melody is simple, beautiful, and elegant—it sounds like a story or a song of praise.

– Second section (bars 26–38): sung entirely on the note *"A*." The left hand of the piano plays very fast triplets, creating a sense of movement and fluidity. The right hand forms a melody that either corresponds with or contrasts against the voice, creating a sense of tension between the fast accompaniment and the slow singing—a combination of movement and calm.

(3) Analysis of Part B

Measures 39–140. Part B has an improvisational character, dominated by vocal coloratura on the vowel *"a."* It can be divided into three sections—a detailed analysis of this part will appear in the next section, so it is not elaborated upon here.

(4) Analysis of Part A'

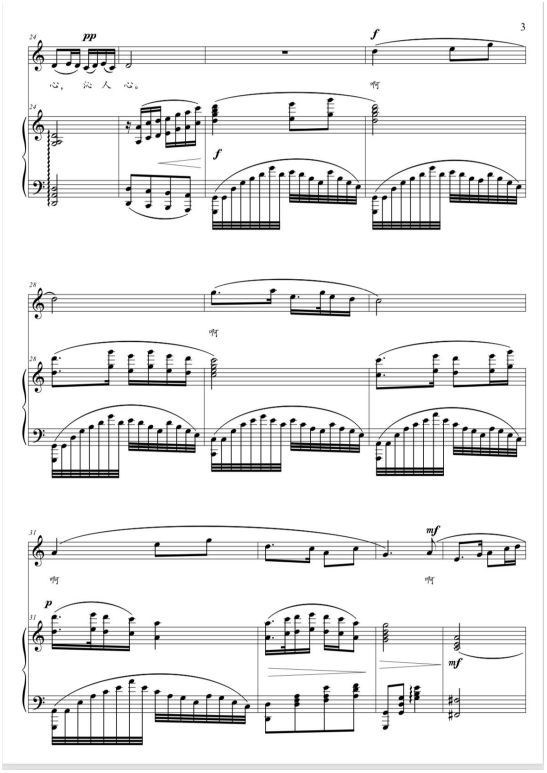
Measures 141–166, serious tempo. *"A'"* is a recapitulation (repetition of the theme) and, at the same time, the climax of the entire piece. It is a section with a summarizing character. The melody has been raised by a perfect fourth relative to the original version from Part A, and the texture of the piano accompaniment is denser and richer, creating a sense of mounting tension and emotion.

At the end, the vowel *"U"* reappears, imitating the sound of a traditional Chinese flute *("xiao"),* which references the beginning of the piece and creates a cohesive, attention-grabbing whole.

Part A consists of two sections:

the first is the song's main melody,
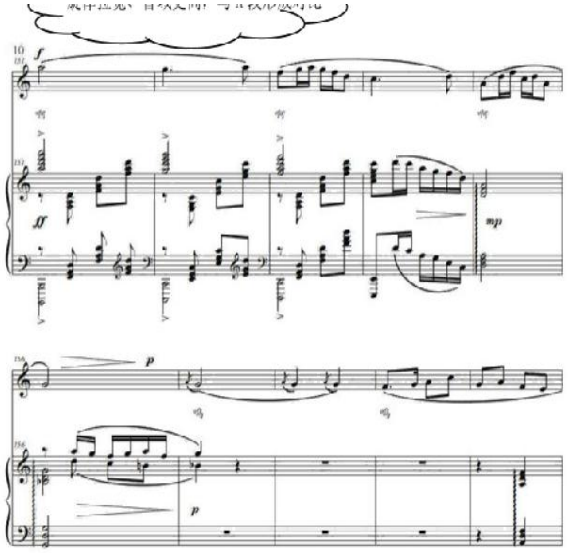
the second is a vocalization on the vowel *"a"* (see musical example 4–4).



Example4 . /4–4/ Excerpt from the song "Spring Moon over the River" ("Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye"), *measures 24–33*

This passage is sung on the vowel *"a,"* which for centuries has served people as a direct means of expressing emotion—it is bright, open, and comfortable to sing. The melodic line in this coloratura section is slightly more drawn out than in the main theme. The piano accompaniment, played in octaves, leads the music to a small climax. The left hand of the piano plays rapid triplets, and the intertwining piano and vocal parts perfectly capture the image of an endless river and undulating water.

In the recapitulation section, measures 151–156 (see musical examples 4–5), the structure is similar to the previous passage—the main theme is followed by singing on a single vowel.



Example5 . /4-5/ Excerpt from the song "Spring Moon over the River" ("Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye"), measures 151–156.
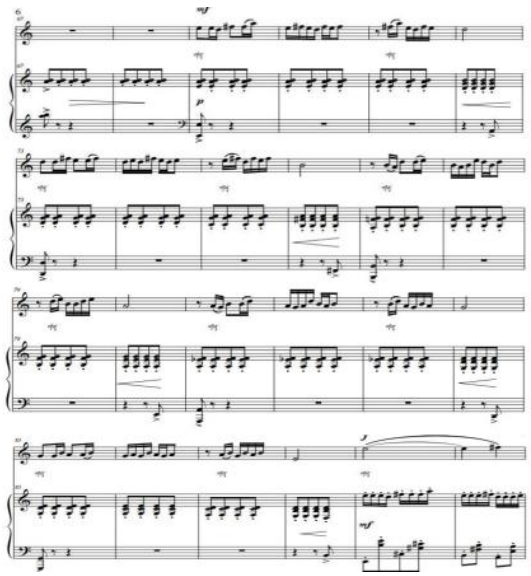
These 6 bars of coloratura appear after the climactic section of the piece. The melody is even more drawn out, the register higher, and the emotions in the singing—stronger and fuller. This creates a strong contrast with the light and delicate character of Part A, which reinforces the sense of layering and development.

Part B of the piece is large in scale and is the most spectacular part of the entire work. The composer uses coloratura to depict Chinese folk scales. The entire section can be divided into three parts. Coloratura appears in the first two, performed exclusively on the vowel *"a."*

The melody is broad, the register high—this contrasts with Part A and creates a distinct variation.

The second part of Section B (bars 57–104) is fast-paced. The key changes frequently, adding coloristic variety to the singing. This section begins with an interlude featuring a dissonant second interval that immediately captures the listener's attention. The human voice sings here in eighth and sixteenth notes, creating a dynamic, energetic impression.

Shortly linked notes and melodic leaps change rapidly, and short motifs lend the music greater energy. The emotions are strong and dynamic. The constant use of coloratura makes the musical picture more vivid (see musical examples 4–6).



Example6 /4-6/ Excerpt from the song *"Spring Moon over the River" ("Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye"), measures 67–90.*

"Spring Moon over the River" is a poetic work deeply rooted in Chinese tradition and aesthetics. Originally, it was a poem by the Tang Dynasty poet Zhang Ruoxu. It describes a beautiful scene of a spring river, flowers, the moon, and the night, while also expressing the author's dreams of a beautiful life, nature, and human existence. It is considered one of the masterpieces of ancient Chinese poetry and has been adapted into music many times.

In Part B of the piece, the technical difficulty of the coloratura lies in the rapid transitions between leaps and legato. The melodic leaps change frequently, so the singer must constantly adjust their vocal production and mouth shape to maintain a consistent sound.

The vocal version *of "Spring Moon over the River"* places great emphasis on coloratura technique, making this section exceptionally demanding. When singing leaps, the breath must be light, quick, flexible, and precise. Even during pauses, the breath should be controlled, stable, and precise. Singers performing fast coloratura passages use rapid, even movements of the diaphragm, which allows them to control the force and frequency of the air's impact on the vocal cords. As a result, the leaps in pitch are very precise and expressive.

As a result, the listener, moved by the music, can feel the beauty and emotions contained in the poetry even more deeply. The piece thus achieves a perfect fusion of aesthetics and art. Overall, the song *"Spring Moon Over the River"* is not only a work of high artistic value but also an elegant presentation of ancient Chinese culture.

4.1.3. *"The Joy of Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring" ("lin hua xie le chun hong")*

Background:

The classical poem *"The Joy of Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring"* was written by Li Yu (937–978), the last ruler of the Southern Tang. Li Yu, also known as Zhongyin, used the pseudonym Lianfeng Jushi. He was the third emperor of the Southern Tang and is known in history as "Emperor Li." He came from an imperial family and possessed great artistic talent—he was an outstanding painter, musician, and above all a poet, particularly in the ci genre (宋词 – sung poetry).

Over 30 of his works have survived to this day, most of them collected in the Ming Dynasty anthology *Poets* of *the Two Emperors* of the *Southern Tang*.

Li Yu's work is divided into two phases with completely different moods and styles, a result of his turbulent life. He had a gentle, sensitive nature and little interest in state affairs—he loved art and literature. Following the unexpected death of the heir to the throne, he was forced to assume power, though he did not desire it. As emperor, he had no interest in politics—for 15 years, his poems primarily described the luxurious life of the court, such as *"Huan Xi Sha"* or *"Pu Sa Man."* However, later, after the fall of his country and his capture, his tone underwent a radical change—grief, longing, and reflection emerged.

Composer's biography:

Sang Tong (1923–2011) was an outstanding Chinese composer and music educator, recognized as one of the key figures in the development of 20th-century Chinese art song.

For many years, he taught at the Central Conservatory of Music, where he educated successive generations of musicians. He sought to combine traditional Chinese poetry with Western compositional techniques.

In his compositions, he employs a lyrical, restrained melodic style and subtle harmony, blending elements of Western tonality with influences from Chinese music. The vocal line follows the natural rhythm of the language, emphasizing the expressiveness of the text.

This piece exemplifies his style — a synthesis of poetry, culture, and modern musical techniques.

Musical analysis and performance notes:

The song *"Joy of Encounter – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring"* consists of two parts. The first part contains three verses:

"The flowers in the forest have fallen from spring—too soon."

"There's nothing to be done about it—the morning drizzle, the evening wind."
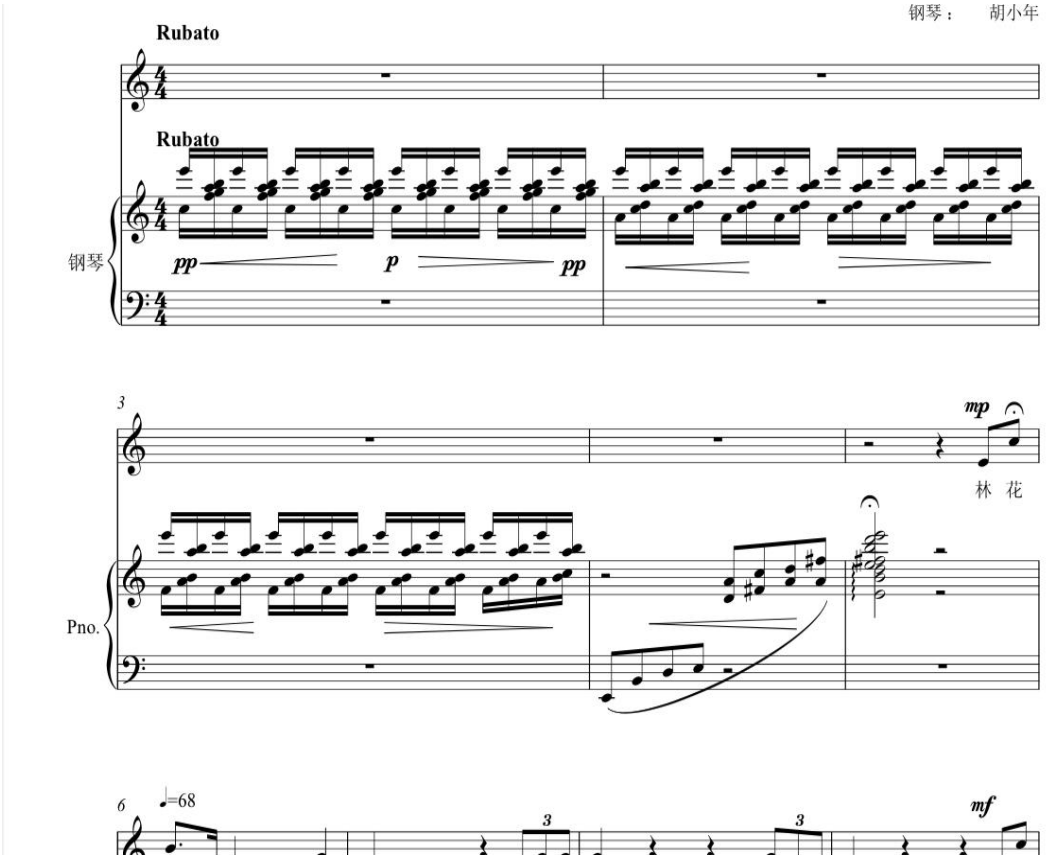
Through the image of falling flowers in the forest, the author expresses sadness associated with the passing of time—everything changes too quickly. Though things look the same, everything has changed. This is something over which we have no control. The flowers are too fragile to withstand the cool wind and rain that come day and night.

The art song, based on the classic poem *"The Joy of Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring,"* has a flowing, lyrical melody and is structured in two parts. The piece features an introduction, Part A, an interlude, Part A1, and a conclusion. The entire piece is based on the natural C major scale. The musical form is presented in the table.

Basic Structure	Prelude	A		Interlude	A'		Coda
Secondary structure		a	b		a'	b'	
Initial and terminal sections	1–5	6–13	14–28	29–35	36–43	44–65	66–67
key	C Natural Major						

3 Table. Structure of the song *"Joy of Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring" ("lin hua xie le chun hong")*

The introduction consists of 5 measures, and the musical material used is mostly consistent. The note E3 appears like the ringing of a bell and continues until the fourth measure. The melody combines elements of Chinese and Western music, complementing each other (see musical example 4–7).



Example7 /4–7/ Excerpt from the song "*Joy of Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring" ("lin hua xie le chun hong"), measures 1–5.*

Part A of the piece consists of two musical sections: **section A and section B** (see musical example 4–8).

Section A consists of four phrases: **a, b, c, and d**, spanning measures 6–13 (a total of 8 measures). This section corresponds to the first stanza of the poem. The melody clearly separates the individual sections of the text, making the boundaries between the lines very distinct.

Section B stands in sharp contrast to Section A. It consists of 15 measures (measures 14–28, see musical examples 4–8) and corresponds to the second stanza of the poem. To better convey the shift in emotion—from sadness to reflection—minor changes have been made to the text. In measures 16–18, the words *"when again"* ("几时重") are repeated, and the music employs a sequence technique to gradually build emotional tension.
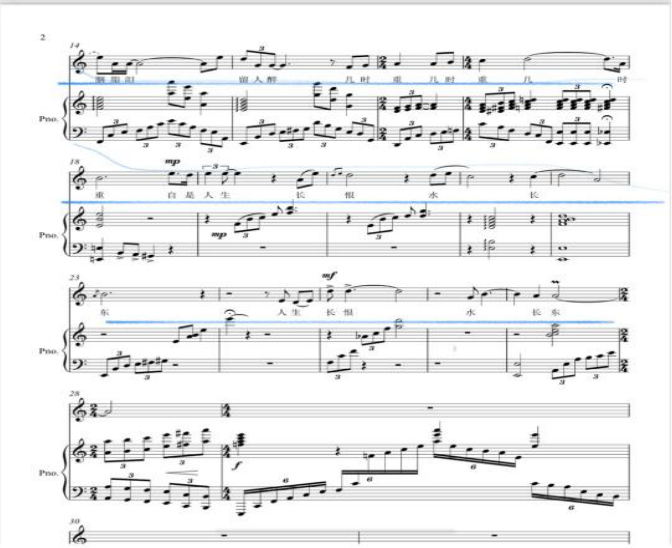
The interlude has a total of 7 measures. The main rhythmic element consists of sixteenth notes played in groups of six (six-note groups), performed in the form of arpeggios (broken chords). After an intense passage, a gradual quieting follows, beginning in measure 34, where the

marking *"poco rall"* appears, meaning "gradually slow down." Following this musical treatment, the theme of the piece is reintroduced.

Section A1 is a repetition of Section A. Although the melody remains almost the same, the texture of the accompaniment changes—where block chords and triplet rhythms previously dominated, dynamic sixteenth notes now appear in ascending and descending motion. Section A1 also consists of 8 measures.

Section B1 is almost identical to section B, but differs in that repetitions are used in B1—multiple repetitions reinforce the emotional depth of the piece.
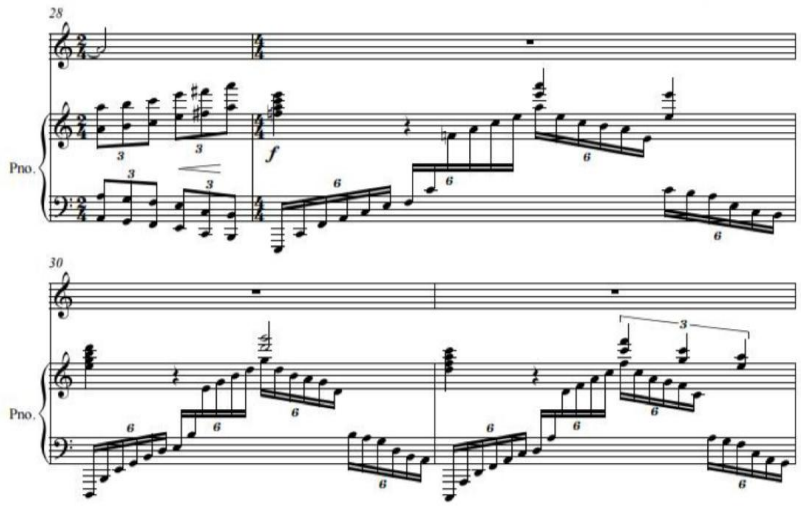
The conclusion *("coda")* is 3 measures long and refers directly to the introduction both rhythmically and melodically. Thanks to this, the entire song ends in a closed form, creating a coherent "bracket" structure.



Example8 / 4–8/ Excerpt from the song *"Joy of the Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring" ("lin hua xie le chun hong"), measures 14–29*

The interlude (bars 29–35) connects the previous section with the next and serves as a transition. The meter changes to 4/4, and the texture is based on an accompaniment motif from the main theme. The rhythm becomes denser through the use of sixteenth notes in the form of six-note groups (sixes). The dynamics are marked f (forte), which gives the sound greater strength and fluidity. The whole creates a rich sonic effect and builds an emotional foundation for the next repetition of the theme with new variations.

(see musical example 4–9).
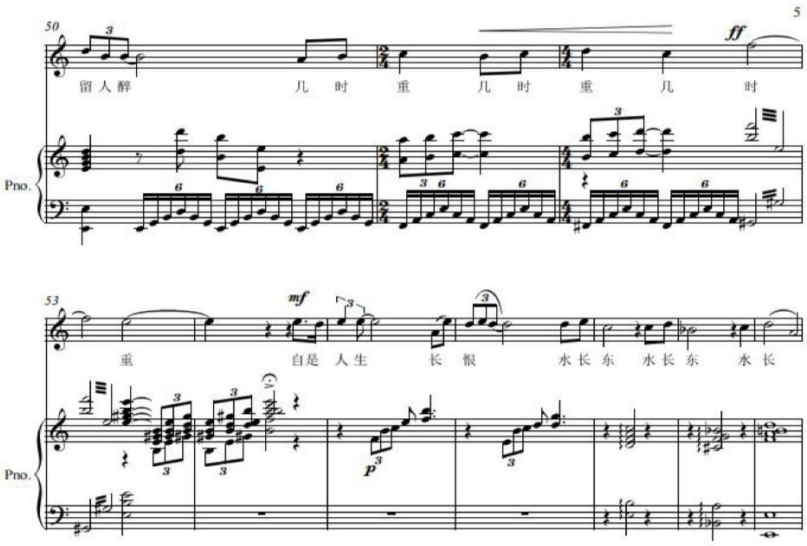


Example9 /4–9/ Excerpt from the song *"Joy of Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring" ("lin hua xie le chun hong"), measures 28–31.*

The second part is a variation and repetition of the first, with the main change in the accompaniment—it uses a motif from the interlude. The dynamics shift from *mp* to ***mf,*** which makes the emotions and fluidity of the music even stronger.

Phrase b1 spans measures 49–54. Compared to the previous section, the melody rises to the note F in the second octave, causing a sudden outburst of emotion and marking the climax of the entire piece.

(see musical example 4–10)



Example10 /4-10/ Excerpt from the song ***"****The Joy of Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring" ("lin hua xie le chun hong"), measures 50–59*

This art song, based on the classical poem *"Joy of the Encounter – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring,"* uses text from ancient Chinese poetry; therefore, when performing it, special attention must be paid to preserving the characteristics of this genre: purity, transparency, and clarity of sound.

Furthermore, after understanding the emotional message and poetic atmosphere of the piece, the singer should use a delicate, melodious, and subtle vocal tone. It is also important to use proper diction and breath control to smoothly shift the timbre between phrases and skillfully build and control the emotional layers throughout the entire performance.

4.1.4. "Spring Morning" ("Chun Xiao")

Background of the piece:

The song *"Spring Morning"* comes from the classical song cycle *"Three Poems from the Tang Dynasty"* by Li Yinghai. This cycle was composed in the early 1980s and is based on three famous poems from the Tang Dynasty: *"Spring Morning"* by Meng Haoran, *"Night Harbor at Fengqiao"* by Zhang Ji, and *"Ascending the Stork Tower"* by Wang Zhihuan. Each of these pieces has a different atmosphere, emotion, and message.

Li Yinghai perfectly understood the meaning of these poems and chose a different melody, key, and compositional technique for each, blending Tang Dynasty poetry with modern music. As a result, these pieces have become very popular art songs.

The poem *"Spring Morning"* is one of the most famous works by the Tang Dynasty poet Meng Haoran. Although it is a short five-line poem with simple language, it is highly evocative. Meng Haoran simply shows how people can hear and imagine nature—feeling the spring and seeing flowers falling after a night of rain. The poem has a gently melancholic tone.

Li Yinghai perfectly captured the poet's feelings—sadness, compassion, and love for the world and humanity—making *"Spring Morning"* a song that seamlessly blends text and music and has become a classic frequently performed by singers.

Composer's biography:

Li Yinghai (1927 – January 5, 2007) was a renowned Chinese composer and music theorist. He graduated from the National Conservatory of Music in Nanjing. He was active in many fields—composing vocal, piano, and film music. His style was unique, and many of his works have survived to this day as classics.

In the field of vocal music, he composed solo pieces, choral works, children's songs, and mass songs. His well-known compositions include *"The Sun Rises—Joy Everywhere," "Thousands of Miles on the Steppe,"* and many others. He also created many classical songs based on ancient poems, such as the cycle *"Three Poems from the Tang Dynasty,"* of which *"Spring Morning"* is one of the most important pieces and the subject of this analysis.

Li Yinghai also arranged the well-known Chinese folk song *"The Little River Flows,"* which is still used today as a standard teaching material in music schools and has had a huge impact on music education in China.

Musical Analysis and Performance Guidelines:

Although the poem *"Spring Morning"* contains only 20 characters, its poetic message is rich and profound, and its language is exceptionally precise and beautiful. The life of the poet Meng Haoran was not an easy one. In many of his works, one can find the sadness of travel, loneliness, and a sense of being lost. The famous poet Du Fu said of him: "Every line of his is worth remembering," which shows the high artistic value of his work.

The main emotions conveyed in this song are longing for spring and fleeting beauty. The first two lines—*"Spring's dream has slipped away unnoticed; birdsong is heard everywhere"*—describe a joyful morning full of signs of spring. The singing should convey a sense of surprise and delight. These images stem from auditory sensations, which makes them unique.

The introduction alone conveys a sense of peace, harmony, and classical beauty, while also hinting at a touch of mystery. Therefore, when singing, it is important to capture this atmosphere and evoke an image of harmonious, early-spring nature. *"Spring Morning"* is a

piece based on *the "D gong"* pentatonic scale[47] , The entire piece has 36 measures and is constructed in a two-part parallel form, comprising an introduction and a conclusion. Unlike most folk songs in the classical two-part form, this composition features a more precisely designed structure.

The piece is written in 2/2 time and maintained at a slow tempo *("largo"),* which allows the emotions accompanying the recitation of the five-line poem to be transformed into a musical message.

Part A (bars 9–16) has a regular 4 + 4 structure, based on the *"D gong"* scale*,* and corresponds to two lines of the poem. The connecting passage (bars 17–20) uses musical material from the introduction (imitating the sound of the wind), which smoothly connects the emotions from the beginning of the piece with the rest of the composition and balances the tension created by the 8-bar introduction.

Part B (bars 21–28) has the same structure as Part A. The conclusion (bars 29–37) matches the length of the introduction—also 8 measures and 16 quarter notes—but when listened to, it seems much longer, reflecting the aesthetic of a poetic mood and a quest for depth of feeling, as shown in the diagram.
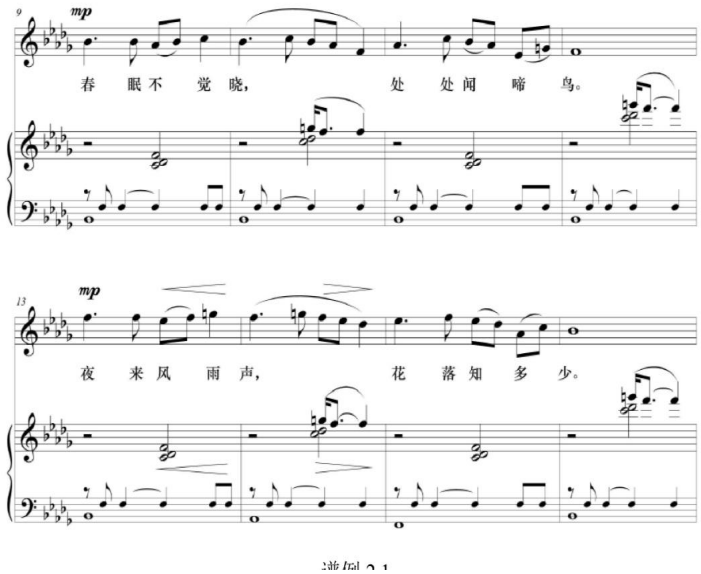
Basic structure	Prelude	A		Connection	B			Coda
Secondary structure		a	a'		b	b‘	b"	
Start and end sections	1–8	9–12	13-16	17–20	21–24	25–28	29–36	37
Tone	D Tuning the home system							

4 Table. Structure of the song "Spring Morning" ("Chun Xiao")

[47] *The "D gong"* pentatonic scale is one of the most commonly used modes in traditional Chinese music. It belongs to the pentatonic system, meaning it contains only five notes and has no semitones.
This corresponds to the solmization: **re – mi – ♯fa – la – xi – re**.

In the composition of *"Spring Morning*," the musical phrases are regular and orderly, and the melody flows calmly and smoothly. The piece employs many circular melodic lines and the technique of sequence, which ensures that the melody is closely integrated with the text, helping to better express the emotions contained in the poetry.

To match the music to the mood of the poem, Li Yinghai used a recitative style—the melodic line was created in accordance with the natural rhythm and intonation of the recited text, allowing for a harmonious combination of words and melody (see musical example 4–11).



Example11 /4–11/ Excerpt from the song *"Spring Morning" ("Chun Xiao")*, measures 9–16.
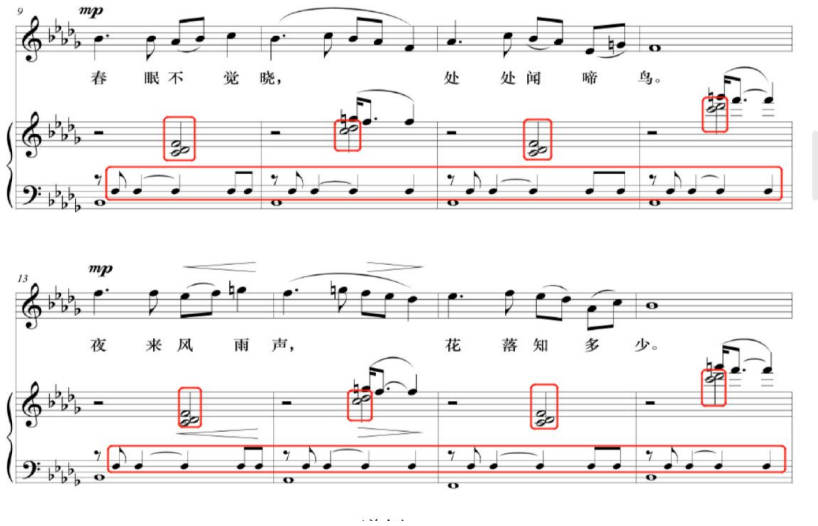
The rhythm of the phrases is stable, without frequent changes. The main rhythmic values are consistent with the melodic line. The melody unfolds slowly and elegantly, reflecting the delicate and peaceful mood of the poem. The composer frequently used the major third interval, which makes the transitions between keys sound natural and smooth.

Spring Morning was written during the time of nature's rebirth, and its overall mood is slow and contemplative. The entire piece is in a slow tempo (*Largo*), which creates a peaceful atmosphere and emphasizes the recitative-singing character of the poem.

After deeply understanding the poet's emotions—joy and, at the same time, sorrow over the passing of spring—Li Yinghai created a musical vision of an early spring morning after the rain.

The composition pays special attention to sound effects—bird song and raindrops recur in the accompaniment, creating an image full of life and springtime freshness.

In Part A (see musical example 4–12)
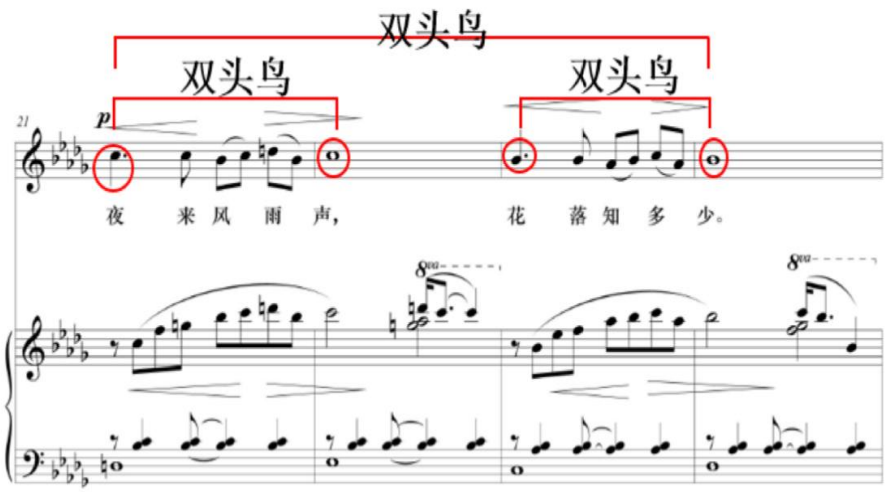


Example12 . /4–12/ Excerpt from the song "Spring Morning" ("Chun Xiao"), measures 9–16.

in the middle voice of the piano, the notes are sustained to imitate raindrops falling slowly and gently. In the upper voice, dissonances between seconds appear, imitating birdsong—these sounds are repeated in octaves, creating an image full of life and energy.

In measures 21–22 (see musical example 4–13), a technique characteristic of Chinese music appears, known as the "two-headed bird"—the beginning and end of the phrase share the same note, which lends the melody great expressive power and heightens its emotional impact.

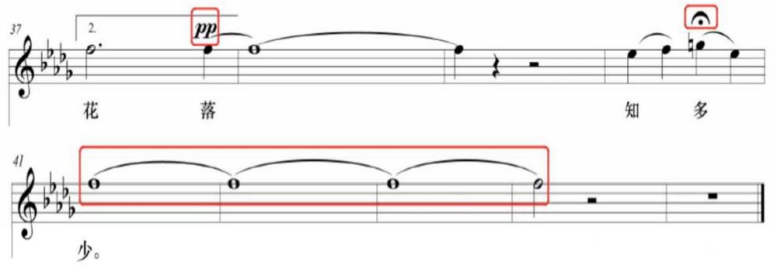
Li Yinghai, using expressive devices drawn from traditional music, depicts the objects to which the poet conveys his feelings: falling flowers, the wind, rain, and birdsong. He combines the sounds of nature with human emotions, portraying the beauty of nature through music. He provides the listener with an evocative and enjoyable auditory experience.



Example13 /4 – 13/ Excerpt from the song *"Spring Morning" ("Chun Xiao"), measures 21–24*

The piece *"Spring Morning"* has a calm and gentle character. The entire composition is characterized by subtle dynamics and gentle changes, so it is best interpreted using slow inhalation and exhalation. When singing, it is recommended to use the "half-voice" technique (i.e., singing with half the strength of a full voice). This requires the performer to have good breath control. Between phrases, the sound should be gentle, fluid, and cohesive to give the listener a sense of harmony and the fullness of the musical message.

High notes should be performed very softly, which requires excellent breath control. The syllable "shǎo" (少) is preceded by the syllable "duō" (多), which is held out freely (see musical example 4–14)



Example14 /4–14/ Excerpt from the song "Spring Morning" ("Chun Xiao"), measures 41–44.

This passage is ideal for breathing. After taking a proper breath, singing can continue with fluidity and coherence. This approach allows the listener to feel the emotions of the piece more deeply and provides space for reflection and imagination.

4.1.5. "Spring at the Han Palace – The First Day of Spring" ("Han chu hong. Li chun ri")

Background of the piece:

"Spring at the Han Palace – The Day of the Beginning of Spring" is a poetic piece by Xin Qiji, a patriotic poet of the Song Dynasty. The poem refers to the Lichun festival (the beginning of spring) and, already in the first line—*"Spring has* returned"—alludes to the folk customs associated with this day. The author expresses his feelings toward the changing times and events, longing for the country of old and criticizing the rulers of the Song Dynasty for their passive attitude toward the loss of the northern lands.

The poem has a well-thought-out structure, deep symbolism, and a rich message. Through metaphorical images—such as rain, swallows, a garden, plum trees, willows, and wild geese—it creates a system of symbols that revolve around the main theme, conveying hidden emotions and reflections.

Inspired by this text, the young composer Yan Ji created a new art song in 2022 based on classical Chinese poetry.

Composer's biography:

Yan Ji (b. 1988), musician, producer, and accompaniment teacher for traditional singing at the Vocal Department of the Wuhan Conservatory of Music. He also serves as deputy director of the piano section of the Hubei Provincial Musicians' Association.

He has participated in nearly a thousand concerts as a pianist-accompanist and has collaborated on numerous editions of national vocal competitions, such as the Golden Bell, the Wenhua Award, and folk song competitions. He has won numerous awards for best accompaniment. He has arranged and published piano scores for vocal compositions by many composers from Hubei.

The song *"Spring in the Han Palace – The First Day of Spring"*

The piece has a simple, parallel two-part form; the main key is *B-flat* gong[48] , and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is beautiful, and the style is lyrical and expressive. The entire piece is based on traditional Chinese melodic motifs, accompanied by piano.

The structure of the piece is divided as follows:

Basic structure	Prelude	A				B				A'				B'				
Secondary structure		a	b	c	d	e	f	e'	g	a	b	c	d	e	f	e'	g	supplement
Opening and closing sections	1–7	8–12	12–16	16–20	20–24	25–28	29–33	33–37	37–43	43–47	47–51	51–55	55–59	60–63	64–68	68–72	72–76	77–80
Key	Key of E-flat major																	

5 Table. Structure of the song "Spring at the Han Palace" – "The First Day of Spring" ("Han chu hong. Li chun ri")

After seven measures of the Introduction, with a harmony ending in a classical cadence—from the dominant to the tonic—the first section follows.

Part A consists of four phrases, each 4 measures long, forming a regular, symmetrical structure. The four phrases correspond to a typical melodic pattern: introduction – development – variation – conclusion. Each phrase contains two motifs—one short, the other longer—which fits well with the rhythm of classical verse.

The endings of the phrases are, in order:

– shang (D),

– jue (mi),

– yu (A),

[48] The *gong* mode in the key of E-flat (lowered E) in traditional Chinese music is a scale based on the note E-flat as the main tone (gong, i.e., the tonic).
It corresponds to the Western key of E-flat major (E ♭ major), but belongs to the Chinese pentatonic system—it consists of five notes.

– gong (C).

The last phrase descends, giving a sense of conclusion and a return to the main tone. The melody has been very carefully adapted to the intonation of spoken Chinese—the pitch of the notes reflects the natural rhythm and accents of speech.

Part B has the same structure and internal logic as Part A, but it is a development of the musical material from Part A.

– The first phrase begins on *"zhi" ("G")* and develops linearly upward.

– The second phrase contains a downward fifth interval—this matches the intonation of the words *"xie" and "xian"* and serves as a transition.

– The third phrase repeats the motif and ending of the first, also ending on *"zhi,"* which creates an open structure before the conclusion.

– The final phrase descends again to *"gong" ("do"),* closing the piece in a coherent and complete manner.
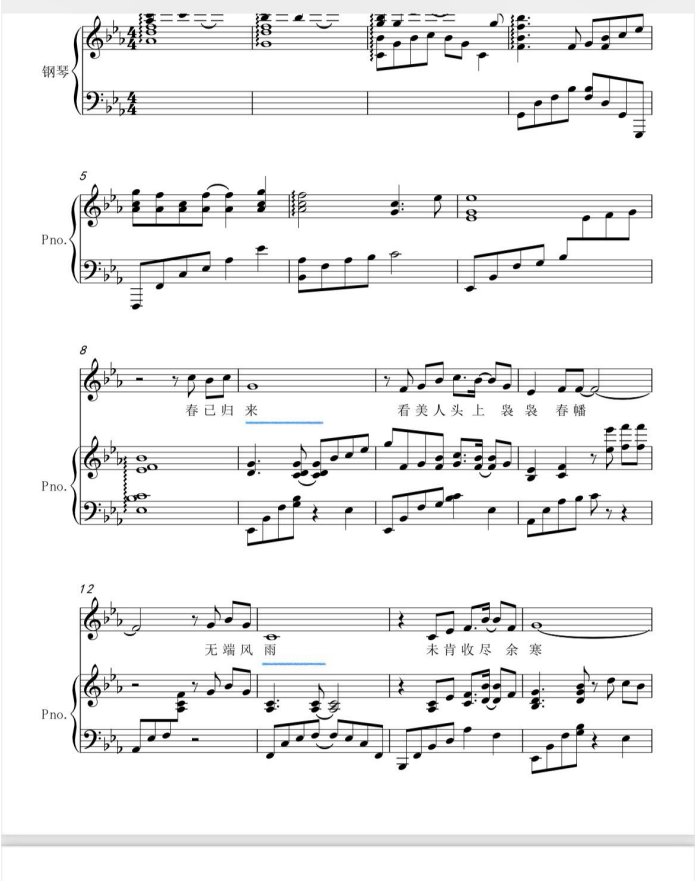
Piano accompaniment:

The left hand plays mainly arpeggios, while the right hand follows the vocal melody line. The harmony is based on simple diatonic chords, but to add variety to the musical texture, there are also chords outside the key and altered chords; for example, a D7/SII chord is used in measure 37, and a seventh chord on the note E-flat in measure 77.

"Spring at the Han Palace – The First Day of Spring" is an artistic song of new classical poetry in the operatic style. The singing style may imitate the manner of singing of the character "Qingyi"[49]

Each syllable at the end of a line should be sung in a high vocal position, and the mouth should not be opened too wide. Characteristic of the operatic style, syllables should be "thrown out" slightly at the end—as shown in musical example 4–15, with the words "lái" (来) and "yǔ" (雨).

[49] "*Qingyi*": a serious, noble heroine in Chinese opera.
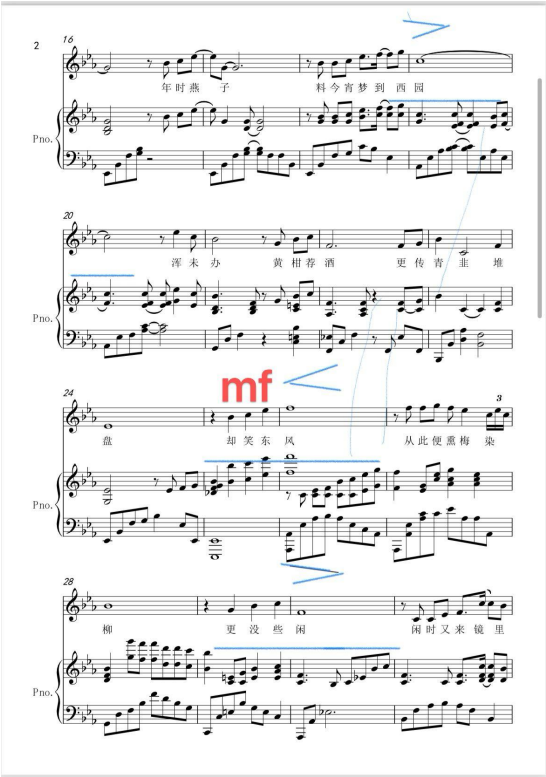


Example15 /4–15/ Excerpt from the song *"Spring in the Han Palace – The First Day of Spring" ("Han chu hong. Li chun ri"), measures 11–14*

In the phrase *"liào jīnxiāo mèng dào xīyuán"* (料今宵梦到西园), the accent falls on the word "xī" **(西)**, while the following word "yuán" **(园)** should be performed with a gentle softening.

In measure 25, the phrase *"què xiào dōng fēng"* (却笑东风) should be performed with increasing dynamics—this is a small climax of the entire song. Take a good breath, and each syllable should be slightly accented and may be gently separated.

The remaining long notes in the piece should be performed with a gentle fade-out *(diminuendo)*.

In measure 29, in the phrase *"gèng méi xiē xián"* (更没些闲), the stress falls on the word "xiē" (些), while "xián" (闲) begins more softly (see musical example 4–16).
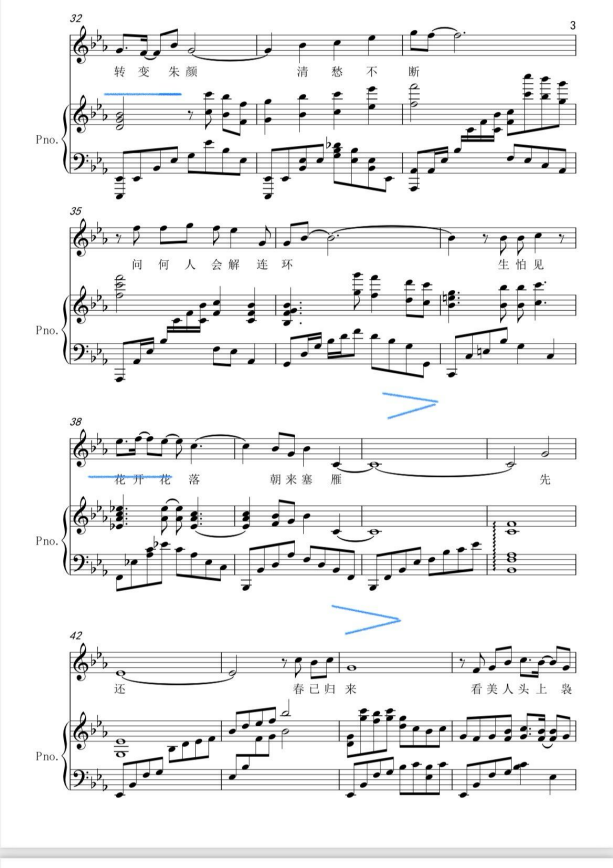


Example16 /4–16/Excerpt from the song "Spring in the Han Palace – The First Day of Spring" ("Han chu hong. Li chun ri"), measures 16–32

In the case of artistic songs of new classical poetry in the operatic style, rhythmic values with a dot in every measure are also very important.

For example, in measure 32, in the phrase *"zhuǎn biàn zhū* yán" (转变朱颜), the accent falls on the word *"zhuǎn"* (转), while *"biàn"* (变) should be sung lightly and the singer should move on quickly.

In measure 38, the phrase *"huā kāi huā luò"* (花开花落) — the accent falls on *the* first *"huā"* (花), and from the last word *"luò"* (落) onward, the dynamics should be gradually reduced (see musical example 4–17).

Accents should be clear but not overly strong—they should not be "forced" out with strength. High notes must be supported by breath and diaphragm control.
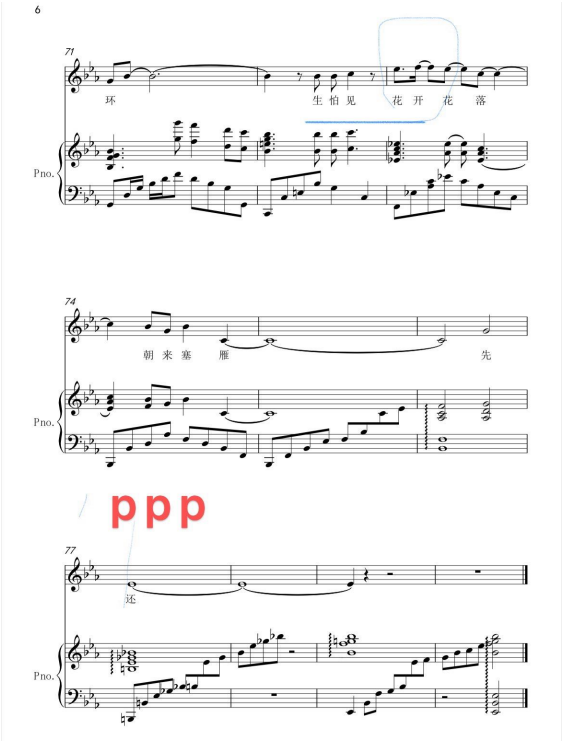


Example17 /4–17/ Excerpt from the song *"Spring in the Han Palace – The First Day of Spring" ("Han chu hong. Li chun ri"), measures 32–45*

At the very end of the piece, in measure 72, the phrase *shēng pà jiàn* **(生怕见)** can be performed with slight reinforcement and **confidence**—*a crescendo* will add expressiveness.

In the phrase *huā kāi huā luò* **(花开花落)** – the first two words, *huā kāi* **(花开)**, can be sung freely and lightly, with an operatic vocal projection.

The ending should be slow, delicate, and calm, and the emotions should be gradually subdued and brought to a close (see musical example 4–18).



Example18 /4-18/ Excerpt from the song *"Spring in the Han Palace – The First Day of Spring" ("Han chu hong. Li chun ri"), measures 71–80*

Summary

In classical Chinese poetic songs in the opera style, the rhythm and sound of the words (intonation and articulation) are of great importance. Every syllable and sound must be pronounced accurately.

Before singing, it is advisable to first read the text aloud with the appropriate rhythm and fluency to get a feel for the unique character and atmosphere of the poetry. This also allows you to understand more difficult characters or ambiguous words in advance, and to learn their correct pronunciation and meaning.

When reciting, slow down the tempo and clearly match each syllable to the corresponding final sound (rhyme). This ensures that the words are articulated clearly and distinctly while singing, allowing the audience to understand the text well. Only when the text is clearly audible can its content and emotions be fully conveyed.

For example, in words such as *"huā"* (花), *"fēng"* (风), *"xián"* (闲), *"qīng"* (清), *and "shēng"* (生), it is easy to make articulation errors—an indistinct ending may sound like a nasal sound before the syllable, which undermines the song's operatic character and its poetic quality.

4.2. Selected European art songs on the theme of spring

4.2.1. Franz Schubert's art song – "Im Frühling" ("In Spring")

Background of the composition

Franz Schubert composed the song *"Im Frühling"* ("In Spring") in 1826. The text is by the German poet Ernst Schulze. Schulze wrote this poem under the influence of his own real, personal experiences of love. Interestingly, Schubert had very similar experiences, which made him strongly identify with the poem's content.

The song tells of longing for a beloved, dreams of love, and the sorrow of being unable to be together. Thanks to the similar life experiences of the poet and the composer, the song has a deep emotional resonance.

Schubert, though he lived a short life, wrote over 600 art songs. *"Im Frühling"* was composed in the spring of 1826, toward the end of the composer's life, and is an example of his mature style. The poem comes from Schulze's *Poetic Diary* (*"Poetisches Tagebuch*"), written between 1813 and 1817. This collection was published in 1822.

After Schubert's death, the song was published in 1828 as a posthumous work (Op. posth. 101 No. 1, D882). British musicologist Graham Johnson proposed compiling 10 of Schubert's songs set to texts from *the Poetic Diary* into a small song cycle titled *"On Wild Paths – Poetic Diary*" (*"Auf den wilden Wegen – Poetisches Tagebuch"*).

Schubert perfectly combined text and music. The poem describes a romantic love scene in a spring atmosphere. The song expresses the desire to spend one's life with a beloved and the sadness of parting. Schubert, working at the cusp of the Classical and Romantic eras, displayed in this song a style that is calm, emotional, yet restrained.

The composer's life:

Franz Schubert (January 31, 1797 – November 19, 1828) was born in Lichtental, a suburb of Vienna. He was an Austrian composer. His work combined Classicism and Romanticism, serving as a bridge between these eras. In his music, Schubert drew inspiration from the folk music of Germany and Austria as well as Viennese classical music. He is particularly known for his art songs *("Lieder"),* of which he wrote over 600—these are among the most important works of this genre in the history of music.

In 1823, Schubert composed the song cycle *"The Beautiful Miller Girl*" (*"Die schöne Müllerin"*) to poems by Wilhelm Müller—one of his greatest achievements in vocal music.

Musical Analysis and Performance Notes

The song's text can be divided into four parts. The first two describe a spring landscape and scenes of lovers strolling. The narrator sits peacefully on a hill; the sky is clear, and a light breeze blows through the valley. In spring, the narrator and his beloved walk together.

The first two sections use the same melody but with different lyrics. The feelings are similar, but they are accompanied by a changing accompaniment that develops the music.

In the third part, the same melody begins to modulate (the key changes), reflecting the shift in emotion in the lyrics. At the end, the song returns to its original key.

Below is a simplified diagram of the song's form:

Basic structure	prelude	A'	Interlude	A''	bridge	A'''	bridge	A''''	code
	a	b	a'	c	a''	d	a'''	c'	a''''
Measures	1–4	5–16	17–20	21–32	33–34	35–40	41	42–49	50
shade	G	G	G	G	g	g	G	G	G

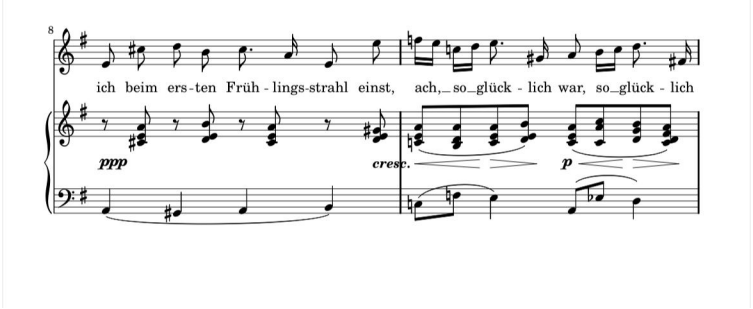
Table6 . Structure of the song "Im Frühling" ("In Spring")

The structure of the song *"Im Frühling"* is based on the rondo form, which is related to the extended three-part form. The main section (A) is repeated several times, with other sections appearing in between. Common elements tie these three-part sections together, creating the rondo structure.

Here is what the main sections of the piece look like:
– Bars 1–4 are section A,
– Bars 5–16 are section B,
– Bars 17–20 are A1,
– Bars 21–32 and 42–49 are C1,
– Bars 33–34 are A2,
– Bars 35–40 are D,
– Measure 41 is A3,
– Measure 50 is A4.

When singing the first section, start gently, as the first word in the text is a weak eighth-note upbeat. Sing with joy and a sense of love, beginning the first sentence in a high vocal register: *Still sitz' ich an des Hügels Hang*, while maintaining breath support. When you reach the phrase *"Wo ich beim ersten Frühlingsstrahl einst,"* the emotions should be slightly subdued.
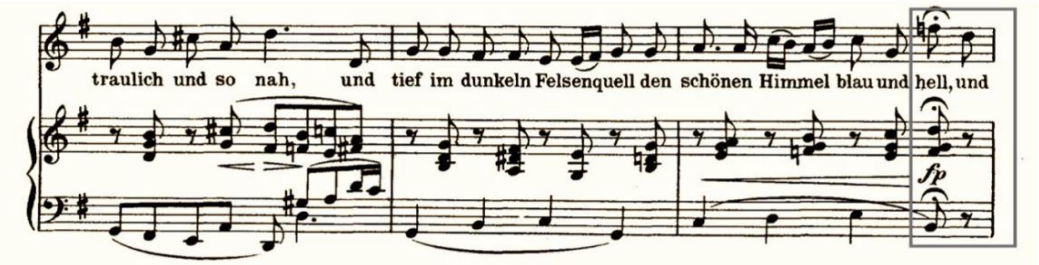
At the words *"Ach, so glücklich war!" a* small *crescendo* should be performed (see musical example 4-2-1), while the second *"so glücklich war"* should be sung more calmly and quietly.



Example19 /4-2-1/ Excerpt from the song "Im Frühling" ("In Spring"), measures 8–9

Here, *a* gentle *diminuendo* should be performed—the last phrase should be slightly quieter and slower than the previous ones.

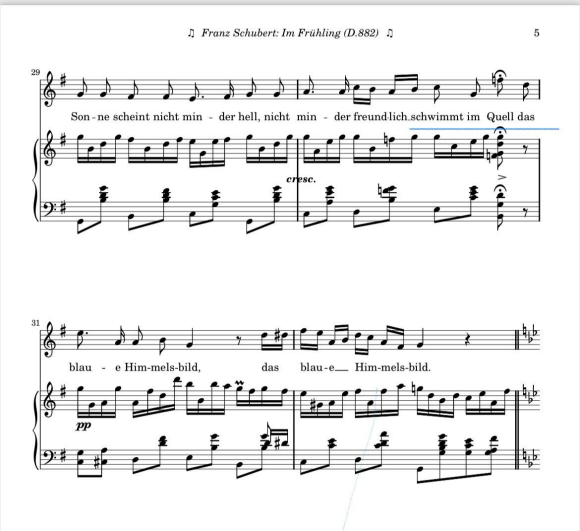
Then the singing transitions into an emotionally charged narrative.
On the words *"blau und hell"* (see musical example 4-2-2), use your breath to gently sustain the sound, lift it softly, and end the first part softly.



Example20 /4-2-2/ Excerpt from the song "Im Frühling" ("In Spring"), measures 13–14

The second verse also begins gently, but with a slightly stronger rhythm than the first, telling the story in a more fluid manner.

Before the phrase *"Von welchem sie gepflückt*," you need to prepare your breath well for the long phrase so that you can develop it calmly and confidently.
As the text changes, so does the musical expression—at *"Nicht minder freundlich schwimmt im Quell"* (see musical example 4-2-3), you must slightly sustain the sound on the extended note, with a gentle slowing down.
In contrast, the phrase *"das blaue Himmelsbild"* should be even slower and calmer than the previous one.

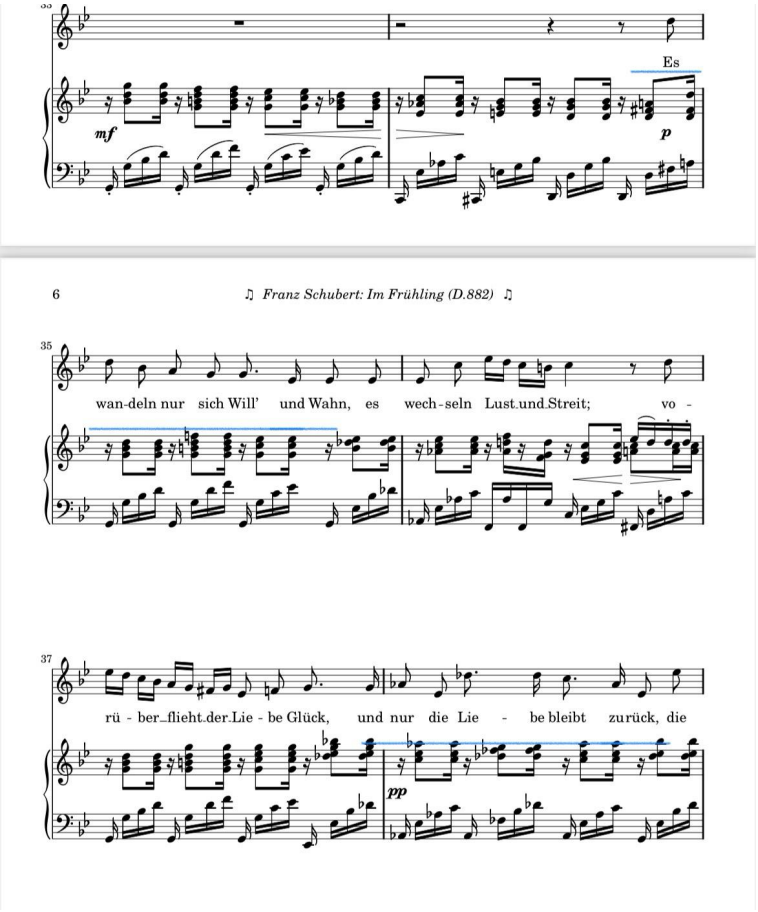


Example21 / 4-2-3/ Excerpt from the song *"Im Frühling" ("In Spring")*, measures 29–3 2

From the modulation in the piano accompaniment in the third verse, the tempo gradually accelerates, which emphasizes the change in emotion.

The first phrase, *"Es wandeln nur sich Will und Wahn*," should be sung with strong, energetic feeling, and the emotions shift along with the text.

However, when we reach *"Und nur die Liebe bleibt zurück*" (see musical example 4-2-4), the feelings express sadness and the mood becomes more melancholic.



Example22 / 4-2-4/ Excerpt from the song *"Im Frühling" ("In Spring"),* measures 33–38
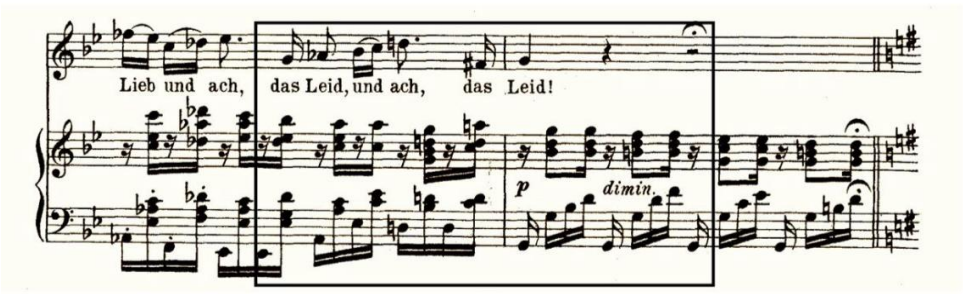
The tempo slows down (see musical example 4-2-5), and then the music unfolds slowly, in a light, regretful tone.

The piano accompaniment also gradually fades away.

Upon returning to the main key, the singing remains delicate, as if in a dream.

At the end, a slight change occurs, closing the song like a whisper from a dream.

谱例 2-5



Example:23 / 4-2-5 / Excerpt from the song "Im Frühling" ("In Spring"), measures 39–40

In the first two verses, the song is in the cheerful key of G major.
The delicate vocal melody flows calmly, describing the beauty of spring and the purity of love, evoking dreams and longing.
The piano accompaniment makes use of many arpeggios (spread chords), making it sound like a gentle stream, bringing peace and solace.
However, in the third verse, a shift occurs—the music changes from the bright major key to the dark G minor. Heavier chords and more diminished notes appear, creating a sad, painful, and anxious mood.
Just like the changeable spring weather, love suddenly disappears, leaving behind loneliness and the pain of its loss.

Fortunately, after a moment of sadness, the music returns to a major key.
The spring breeze carries the scent of flowers and blows away the sorrow.
Though the beloved has gone, the memory of love remains—one still wants to sing for her, for longing and love still live in the heart.

4.2.2. Song Johannes Brahms - “Die Mainacht” (“May Night”)

Artistic features and background

The song *“Die Mainacht” (“May Night”),* Op. 43 No. 2*,* by Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) is one of his most famous and most frequently performed German songs. The piece was composed in 1866 and published in *the* cycle *“Vier Gesänge” ("Four Songs"),* Opus 43, as its second part. At this time, Brahms was already in the prime of his creative maturity—he had recently completed the monumental work *“Ein deutsches Requiem”* (A German Requiem, 1865–1868), and his experience in the field of vocal and choral music was extensive.

The text of the song was written by Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Hölty (1748–1776)—a German lyric poet of the Empfindsamkeit era (18th-century sentimentalism). His work often depicts nature, melancholy, and the transience of life. *The* poem *“Die Mainacht”* describes a romantic landscape of a spring night, yet amidst the beauty of nature, the speaker feels loneliness and a longing for love. Through natural imagery—the silver moon, the nightingale, a pair of turtledoves—Hölty subtly conveys human emotions: loneliness and a desire for closeness.

In his composition, Brahms makes a significant choice: of the four stanzas of the original poem, he uses only the first, third, and fourth, omitting the second (which describes a

joyful, luminous image of the night). Thanks to this, the song acquires a distinct, three-part form and a logical emotional progression. In the piece, we observe the lyrical subject strolling through spring nature at night, contemplating its quiet beauty—the glow of the silver moon, the song of the nightingale, the cooing of the turtledoves—while at the same time sinking into a feeling of loneliness and a longing for love. On the surface level, the text presents an idyllic picture of a spring night, where everything seems to be full of love and harmony: "the moon shines brightly, birds sit in pairs." On a deeper level, however, a contrast emerges—the happiness of nature and the animal pairs underscores the protagonist's loneliness, and his longing for love becomes even more poignant. This contrast between the springtime abundance of life and inner solitude is strongly linked to Brahms's own emotional state.

Spring, traditionally associated with love and the joy of lovers, becomes in this piece a backdrop for a profound experience of loneliness. One might therefore say that this song, though set in a spring landscape, essentially expresses the state of mind of a man alone amidst a love that "belongs to others, but not to me."

Biography of the composer

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) was one of the most important composers of German Romanticism and one of the three brilliant creators known as the "three Bs"—Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. He was born in Hamburg into a family of musicians and showed extraordinary artistic talent from an early age. As a young pianist, he began touring Europe, winning the acclaim of audiences and critics alike. His life and work were deeply connected to Vienna, where many of his most influential works were composed.

Brahms's oeuvre spans many musical genres, including symphonies (e.g., *"Symphony No. 1," "Symphony No. 3")* chamber music (piano quintets, string sextets) piano works (e.g., *intermezzos, rhapsodies*) vocal works (e.g., *"Ein deutsches Requiem,"* numerous art songs—*"Lieder"*) Brahms's musical style is characterized by rigorous formal construction and structural perfection, yet also by the emotional depth and lyricism characteristic of the Romantic era. He drew inspiration from the works of Bach and Beethoven, creating music rich in harmony and subtle polyphony. In the vocal repertoire, Brahms composed over 200 German art songs *("Lieder"*), many of which remain part of the standard concert and educational repertoire to this day. Among the most frequently performed are: *"Die Mainacht" "Meine Liebe ist grün", "Von ewiger Liebe".*

Table 7. Structure of the song "Die Mainacht" ("May Night")

Basic structure	Prelude	A		B			A1		Coda
Secondary structure		a	b	c	d	e	a1	e	
Introduction and conclusion	1-2	3-8	9-14	15-20	21–26	27–32	33–38	39–48	49–51
key	#F		#f	D		#F			

The piece has a three-part form (ABA) with a short introduction and coda. New elements appear in the recapitulation, so it is not an exact repetition of A. The main key is F-sharp major. In the middle of the piece, there are key changes—to *F-sharp minor and D major.* At the beginning, the harmony establishes the key through a simple I–V–I progression. The piano plays figures in eighth-note rhythm with small leaps. The bass plays long notes—half notes in chords. This creates a calm and bright major mood. Section A consists of two distinct phrases. The harmony begins again on the tonic and reinforces the key. The rhythm consists mainly of eighth notes and quarter notes, sometimes with a dotted rhythm.
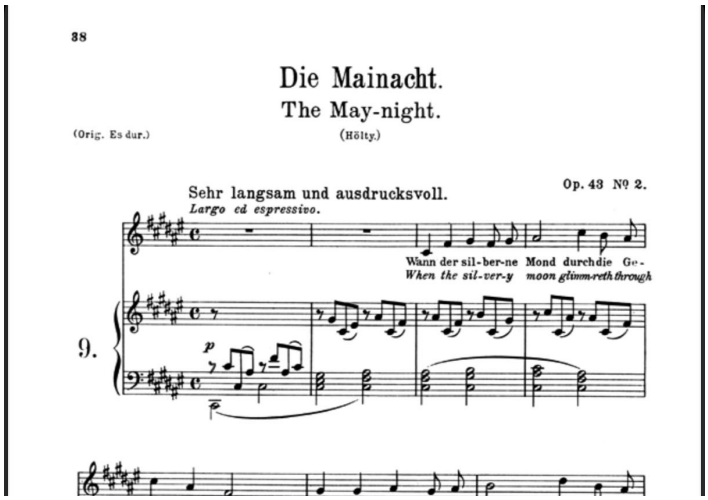
The melody moves in a undulating manner—combining stepwise motion and leaps, spanning more than one octave.

Section B has three phrases, each with different material. The melody is in the middle and upper registers. The rhythm is more varied—there are dotted notes and even divisions. A descending scale-like motion appears, along with repeated notes that intensify the emotion. The final phrase features longer rhythmic values (whole notes, dotted half notes), creating a breathing effect.

Section A^{1} (*reprise)* The first phrase resembles Section A, while the second contains new material. The piece ends on the tonic (I). The coda retains the same character of the accompaniment. The rhythm is based on even intervals. The whole piece ends on the tonic, providing a clear and peaceful conclusion.
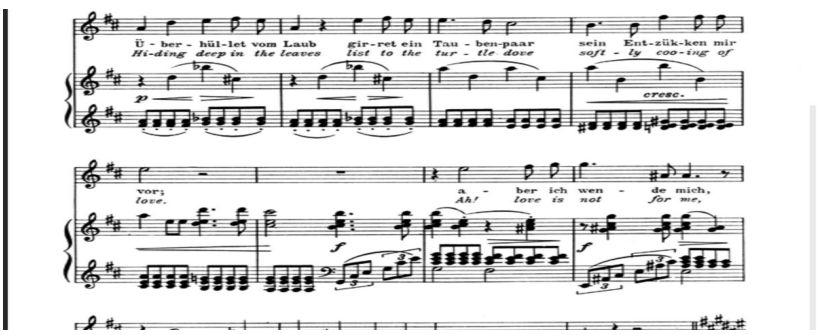
Before the vocal part enters, there are two measures of a short introduction (see musical example 4-2-6), which serve as a concise preparation for the beginning of the piece. This is one of the characteristic elements of Brahms's song writing—introductions are usually short and simple, serving as a sincere expression of the composer's inner feelings.

Most of his songs were composed under the influence of strong emotions and take the form of a direct lyrical confession. The introduction to this song establishes the basic accompaniment and textural pattern for the entire A section. Brahms uses broken chords here: the left hand plays chords or intervals in half-note values in a stacked arrangement, while the right hand plays eighth notes, interacting with the bass. This arrangement creates an atmosphere of nocturnal silence and tranquility. The structure of the introduction is clear and orderly—it is a typical piano textural motif, frequently used by Brahms in his songs.



Example24 /4-2-6/ Excerpt *from* the song *"Die Mainacht" ("May Night"),* measures 1-4

In section B, further expressive techniques are employed, utilizing tonal contrast and changes in harmonic texture to convey subtle emotions. In the key of B-flat major, the piano accompaniment shifts to eighth notes in the left hand and quarter notes in the right, which harmonize with each other, painting a picture of a person observing a pair of doves showing affection for one another in a quiet, nocturnal setting. Inside, however, anxiety and loneliness arise, reflecting painful and subdued inner emotions. (See musical example 4-2-7）



Example25 / 4-2-7/ Excerpt from the song *"Die Mainacht" ("May Night"),* measures 15–22

A brief instrumental passage is followed by a prolongation of the melancholic mood, which serves as emotional preparation. *"Aber ich wende mich, suche dunklere Schatten, Ach…"* *(*"But I turn away, seeking darker shadows, Ah…"), seeking a lonely place…
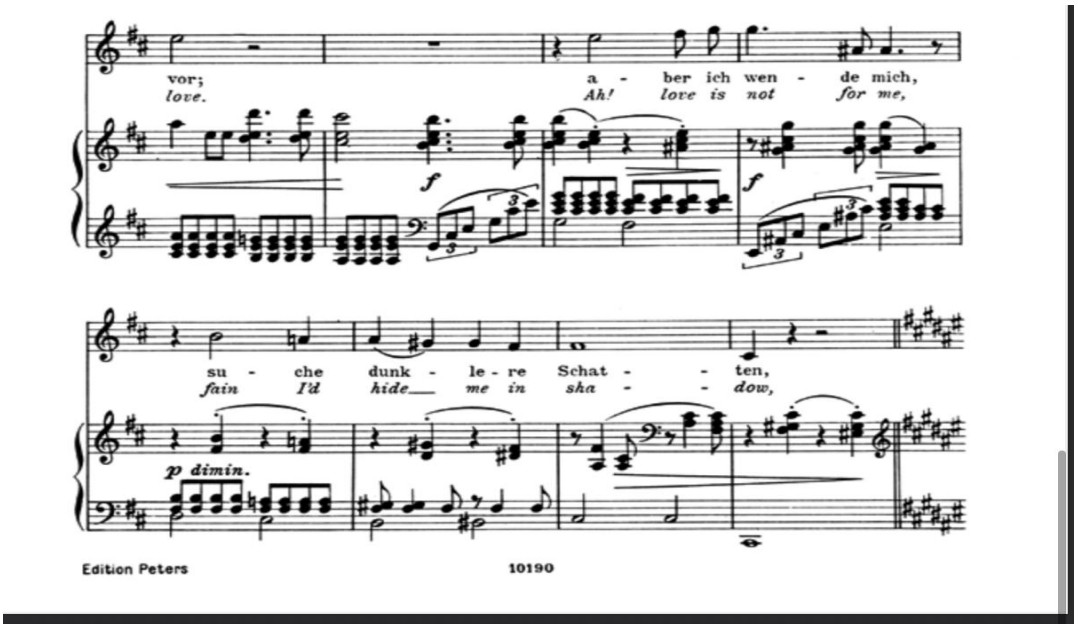
This excerpt depicts: A quiet night; the poet sees lovers nestled together in the moonlight. Yet a deep loneliness and pain arise in his heart. Therefore, he "turns away," seeking to hide in a dark, quiet corner to escape the scene that pierces his soul. *"Aber ich wende mich"*

Emotions: This is a turning point within him—a shift from observing the outside world to his own suffering. Performance: *"Aber"* should be sung with a sudden turn and a bitter flash of awareness. The dynamics remain f (*forte*), but without shouting. The melody rises and has an accent—maintain a focused, resonant vocal line. *"suche dunklere Schatten"* Emotions: A withdrawal into the inner self begins, an escape from people; the mood becomes more subdued and lonely.

Performance: The score indicates p diminuendo—emotions slowly subside, and the voice becomes more delicate. The words *"dunklere Schatten" ("darker shadows")* carry a strong visual image—one may slightly darken the tone of the voice, add a touch of airiness, but while maintaining full breath support.

Here, Brahms uses tonal contrast and changes in harmonic texture to emphasize an internal emotional transition: from the bright, external world in the key of B-flat major toward a darker, more lyrical inner world.

When singing, one should not drown out the piano—rather, blend into the nocturnal mood, breathing in unison with the accompaniment. (see musical example 4-2-8)



Example26 /4-2-8/Excerpt from the song *"Die Mainacht" ("May Night")* measures 21–26

At the end of the piece, a vocal passage appears. The line *"Und die einsame Träne / bebt mir heißer die Wange herab"* is repeated twice in the piece. The accompaniment evokes the atmosphere of night slowly enveloping the space, while emotions gradually intensify.

The tonality remains within the main key, but gentle harmonic shifts gradually emerge, creating a delicate layer of melancholy.
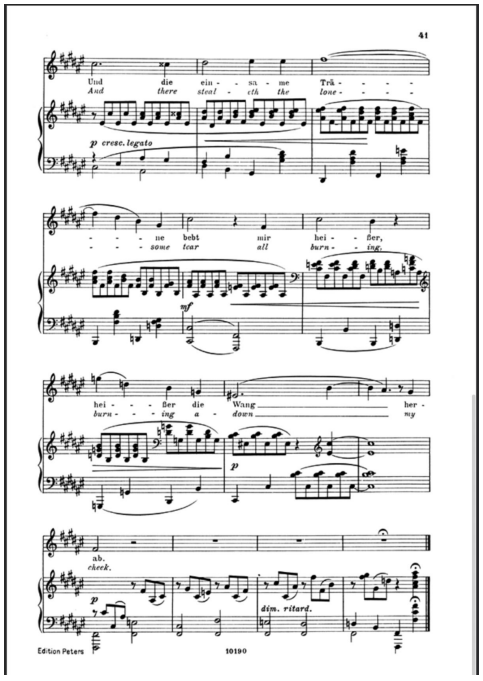
At this point, *the crescendo-legato* is extremely important—the volume must not be increased suddenly; it should sound as if emotions were slowly welling up deep within the heart.

"Und die einsame Träne" Emotions: This is the climax of the entire piece—the tear symbolizes the poet's deepest, loneliest feelings. *"Und die einsame"* should begin gently, like an inner monologue.

The tone on *"Träne"* must be held steadily and with full support; it must not falter—it is meant to resemble a tear trembling in the eye. Pay attention to the crescendo-legato: the emotions gradually intensify, but the vocal line should remain soft and fluid.

"bebt mir heißer die Wange herab," "bebt mir heißer" should have a slightly trembling quality—as if the emotions were subtly quivering*; "die Wange herab"* is a natural descent of the melody and a release; it should be performed according to the dim. and ritard. markings—gradually softening the volume and slowing the tempo.

In the conclusion, the breathing must be calm, the sound focused, to leave space for the piano to finish the piece and create the impression that the night and the tear have merged into one. (See musical example 4-2-9)



Example27 /4-2-9/ Excerpt from the song *"Die Mainacht" ("May Night")* measures 39–51

The lyrics of *"Sounds of Spring"* are in German, which poses a challenge for many singers because the German language has many consonants and guttural sounds.

Before you start singing, you must first read the entire text—as if it were poetry—in a high tone, with clear diction, paying particular attention to the "t" and "d" endings.

Once each syllable is pronounced correctly, you can combine it with the melody.

"May Night" ("Die Mainacht") is an art song by the German composer Johannes Brahms, composed in the mid-19th century. The text is by the poet Ludwig Hölty.

In European culture, May symbolizes the height of spring—a time of nature's rebirth, birdsong, blooming flowers, and couples in love. It is a season full of life and a romantic atmosphere. However, the poet chooses to walk alone on such a spring night, and in an environment full of love and life, he feels deep loneliness and pain. It is precisely the contrast between *the "brightness of spring"* and *"inner darkness"* that forms the core of this song's emotional tension. The text depicts the poet seeing doves nestled together; the night is mild and peaceful, yet he feels lonely and turns away to enter the shadows.

The doves and couples in love symbolize springtime love and the exuberance of life. This bright, idyllic image further highlights the poet's inner sadness. In the music, a modulation gradually takes place; the harmonic colors grow darker, the texture of the accompaniment thickens, and the emotions begin to build. *A crescendo-legato* appears, symbolizing the slow, internal ebb and flow of feelings. In the vocal interpretation of Brahms's song *"May Night" ("Die Mainacht"),* the key is: authenticity and restraint of emotion—it is not about dramatic exaggeration, but about deeply felt loneliness.

A close fusion of music and poetry—the vocal line and the piano texture must intertwine, like air moving through the night landscape. Subtle interpretive techniques—crescendo-legato, diminuendo, and ritardando—must be executed naturally and smoothly.

The conclusion is the spiritual core of the piece—a single lonely tear that quietly falls in the stillness of the night; the emotions are deep but not outwardly expressed.

4.2.3. Bizet's Art Song – "Chanson d'avril" ("April Song")

Background

"Chanson d'avril" ("April Song") was composed during a period when Bizet's musical style was still taking shape.

The text is taken from a poem written in 1859 by the poet Louis Hyacinthe Bouihet.
Bizet had a deep knowledge of literature and excellent taste—he knew how to choose beautiful and meaningful texts.

The poem describes spring in April: nature comes to life, everything becomes full of energy and romance.
Love also awakens among the trees. Bizet used a beautiful vocal melody and piano accompaniment to convey the joy of spring and the vitality of nature.

Composer's biography:

Alexandre César Léopold Bizet (known as Georges Bizet, 1838–1875) was a French composer of the Romantic period.
He died young, and although he did not achieve great success during his lifetime, his last opera, **Carmen*,* became one of the most frequently performed operas in the world.

Bizet was a very talented student at the Paris Conservatory and won many awards, including the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1857.
Although he did not perform publicly as a pianist very often, he was considered an outstanding virtuoso.

After spending just over three years studying in Italy, he returned to France, where, however, modern operas were not very popular.
Most of his instrumental works were overlooked, so Bizet made his living mainly by arranging the music of other composers. In the 1860s, he wrote many operas, but most of them were never staged.
His operas **The Pearl Fishers* (*Les pêcheurs de perles*) and *The Pretty Girl from Perth* (*La jolie fille de Perth*)* were also unsuccessful. During the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), he served in the National Guard. After the war, his opera **Djamileh** was not well received, but the music he composed for Alph*onse* Daudet's play **The Girl from Arles* ("L'Arlésienne")* by Alphonse Daudet, adapted into an orchestral suite, won acclaim—it was one of his few successes during his lifetime.
While working on the opera *"Carmen*," Bizet feared that the themes of betrayal and crime would be too controversial for the audience. The opera's premiere on March 3, 1875, in Paris turned out to be a fiasco. Three months later, the composer died of a heart attack.
After his death, he was recognized as a highly talented and original composer, and the opera *"Carmen"* continues to captivate audiences worldwide to this day.

Musical Analysis and Interpretation of the Piece

The song *"Chanson d'avril" ("April Song")* has a simple two-part form (*A–B form*) and is written in the key of F major. Part A consists of two parallel musical phrases (a + a'), which correspond to the 1st and 3rd stanzas of the text (Bizet omitted the 2nd stanza).

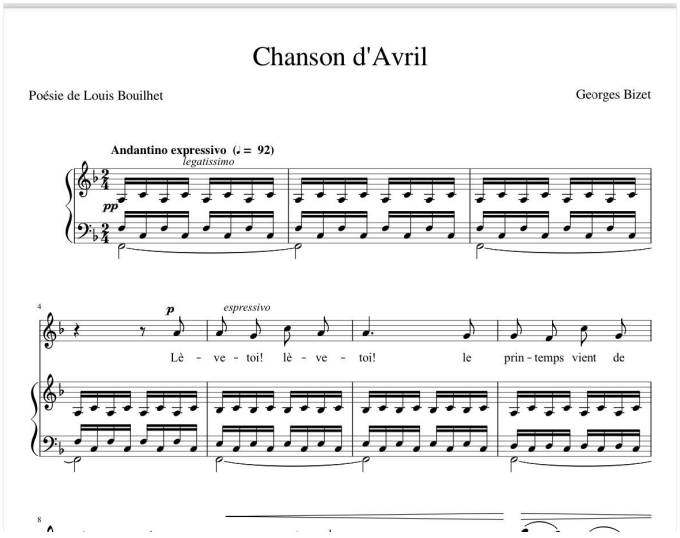
Part B contains the remaining two stanzas of the text (b + c) and is characterized by distinct musical changes. The entire piece is based mainly on even eighth notes as the basic melodic line.

It is only in the final measures of Part B that *a crescendo* and half notes appear, creating a distinct contrast (as shown in the table).

Basic Structure	A		B		A'		B'	
	a	a'	b	c	a	a'	b'	c'
Opening and closing sections	1–14	15–20	21–32	33–56	57–66	66–74	75–86	87–107
key	F major							

8 Table. Structure of the song "Chanson d'avril" ("April Song")

"Chanson d'avril" was composed during the period when Bizet's style was taking shape. The piece has a light and compact character, full of an idyllic mood; it evokes a sense of peace, freshness, and the warmth of the spring sun (see musical example 4-2-15).



Example28 /4-2-1/ Excerpt from the song "Chanson d'avril" ("April Song"), measures *1–7*
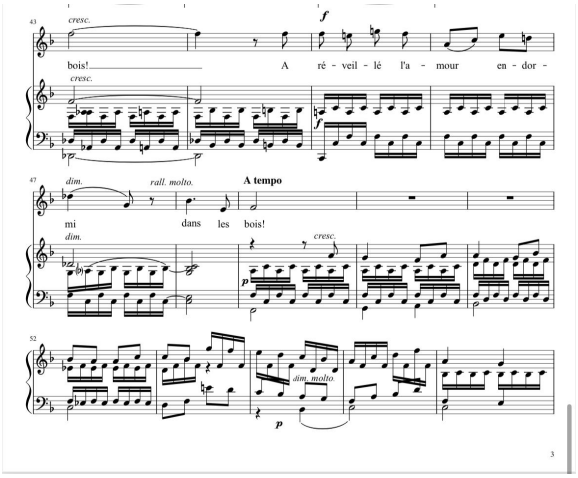
In this simple two-part form, the first and second parts require the singer to vary their performance appropriately.

In the piece, the accompaniment is based on dense sixteenth notes that run throughout the entire song.

The left hand in the piano part maintains a steady tone on the tonic, which gives the piece a calm and smooth texture.

In measure 44, note the *"f" (forte)* marking on the words:

"A réveillé l'amour endormi dans les bois"—"*She awakened the love sleeping in the woods"* (see musical example 4-2-16).



Example29 / 4-2-16/Excerpt *from* the song *"Chanson d'avril" ("April Song"),* measures *43–56*

Starting from bar 47, on the syllable *"-mi,"* the volume should gradually decrease until bar 49, on the word *"bois,"* when the music returns to its original tempo.

Starting in measure 90, the phrase appears:

"Et te parler d'amour sous les poiriers en fleurs!"

(*"And to speak to you of love beneath the blossoming pear tree!"*)
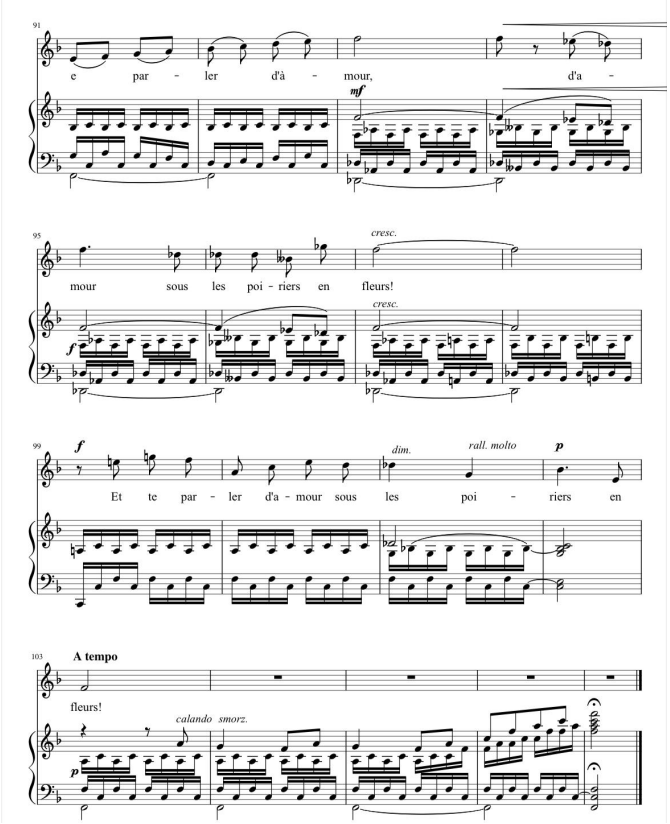
(see musical example 4-2-17).

This phrase appears twice, so it should be sung with contrast:

– When this text first appears, the ending *"fleurs!"* in measure 97 should be sung *crescendo* to emphasize the rising emotion.

– When repeated in measure 99, the same phrase should move from *forte* to *piano*.

We sing the word *poiriers* as softly as possible, with a slight slowing of the tempo, and at the end, with *fleurs!*, we return to the original tempo.



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Example30 /4-2-17/Excerpt *from* the song *"Chanson d'avril" ("April Song"),* measures *91–107*

In this song, Bizet expresses subtle and delicate emotions.

He uses poetic imagery, symbols, shifts in mood, and suggestions to create a hazy, poetic atmosphere.

Bizet often uses descriptions of nature to express beautiful dreams of love, which is an eternal theme in music.

His songs are characterized by a beautiful melodic line, gentle, flowing singing, simple yet expressive harmony, and a clear form—all of which create his unique lyrical style.

In his music, one can hear how the melody blends with the rhythm of speech.

The phrase *Du côté des* lilas—*Among the lilacs*—appears in the song and is repeated twice.

In spoken French, the intonation of this phrase rises, which is why the melody also goes up.

When singing, this phrase should be performed with a warm and bright tone.

In the second part of the text, the phrase *Viens, partons!—"Come, let's go!*"—appears twice.

The composer later added *Lève-toi! – "Get up!*", which intensifies the emotion and emphasizes the joy of spring's arrival.

The repetitions and gradual intensification of expression give this section greater expressiveness.

Bizet was able to express a longing for love through images of nature, and his songs strive for the beauty of melody, harmony, and simplicity of form. All dynamic markings (e.g., *crescendo, diminuendo*) are of great importance and allow the performer to convey the image of spring and nature awakening. All of this together creates his unique musical style.

4.2.4. Paolo Tosti's Art Song – "Aprile" ("April")

Main theme: Love

Background

The lyrics for the song *"Aprile"* were written by Rocco Emanuele Pagliara (1856–1914).

The poem was written in October 1882 in Milan and was published in 1884 by the renowned Italian publishing house Ricordi.

Pagliara was renowned for the originality and charm of his poetry. He was also an active collaborator with the Ricordi publishing house, which published works by composers such as Donizetti, Bellini, Rossini, and Verdi. Tosti set 16 of Pagliara's poems to music.

Biography of the composer

Francesco Paolo Tosti (born April 9, 1846 – died October 2, 1916) was a famous Italian song composer.

He was born in the coastal town of Ortona, Italy. At the age of 11, he began his studies at the Royal Conservatory in Naples.

In 1894, he became a professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London—he was the first foreigner to hold this position. Tosti later became a British citizen and was knighted.

In 1913, he returned to Italy and spent the last years of his life there. He died in Rome on October 2, 1916.

Tosti devoted himself mainly to composing art songs—he wrote over 300 of them in various languages: Italian, English, French, and Neapolitan.

His works are known for their gentle, lyrical, and often melancholic melodies.

From 1858 to 1866, he studied violin and composition at the conservatory in Naples, which is why Tosti's music contains many Neapolitan characteristics.

As mentioned earlier, Naples, situated on the Mediterranean Sea, is famous for its sunshine, cuisine, and hospitality. The people there are full of passion and love for music, and their songs are rich in ornamentation, energy, and variety—qualities clearly evident in Tosti's work.

Musical Analysis and Performance Guidelines

The piece *"Aprile"* has a simple two-part form with parallel sections, reminiscent of a recitative. The main key is C major, as shown in the illustration

Basic structure	Prelude	A			A'			B				Interlude	A		A'			B			
Secondary structure		Introduction	a	b	Introduction	a'	b'	c	d	e	c'		a	b'	Introduction	a'	b'	c	d	e	c'
Opening and closing sections	1–6	7	8–11	12–15	16	17–20	21–25	26–28	29–30	31–34	35–38	39–44	45–48	49–52	53	54–57	58–62	63–66	67–68	69–71	72–77
key		C major																			

9 Table. Structure of the song "Aprile" ("April")

Performance and interpretation

This song tells of the arrival of spring—a wonderful time when flowers bloom and the air smells familiar—as if love were approaching.

The piece is in the key of C major, which well captures the cheerful and fresh mood of April.

The piece is in two parts.

The eight-bar piano introduction features *arpeggios* that sound like a light spring breeze. When the voice enters, the rhythm of the singing and the piano diverge, as if engaged in a dialogue—the singer and the wind. The entire piece should be performed lightly, smoothly, and with a natural, soft tone.

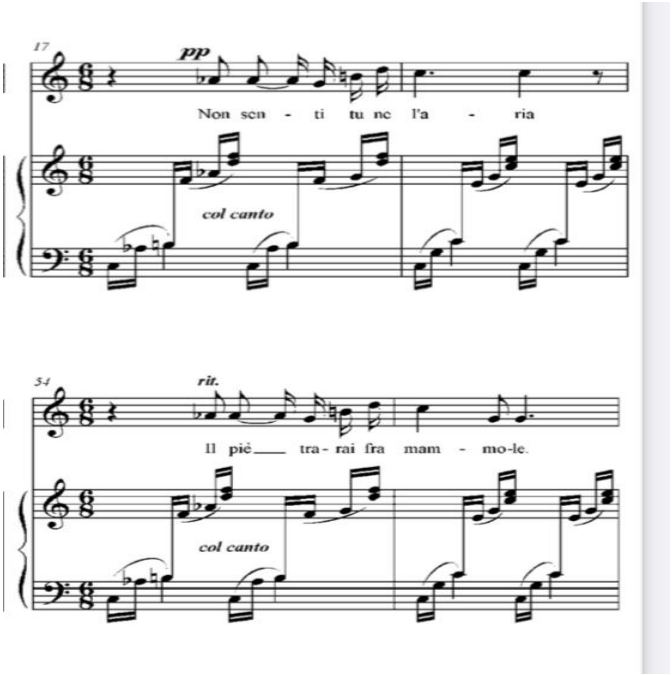
In the second part (A'), Tosti alters certain notes—*G* and *A* by a semitone—which introduces a harmonic shift through the use of a diminished seventh chord in C minor.

As a result, section A' has a different character than A, which emphasizes the questioning emotions contained in the words of the first section:

Non senti tu ne l'aria – Can't you feel it in the air? (see musical example 4-2-18).

The same motif in the second verse is now:
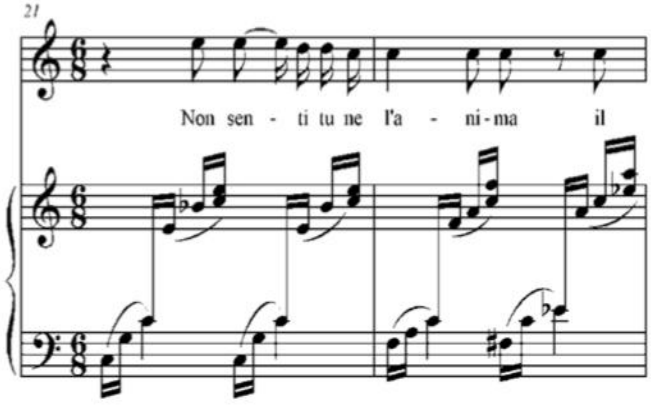
Il piè trarrai fra mammole – *Your feet tread among the violets,* conveying a more delicate and gentle feeling expressed through the marking *rit.* – that is, a slowing of the tempo.



Example31 /4-2-18 Excerpt *from* the song *"Aprile" ("April"),* measures *17–18, 34–35*

In measure 54, a *ritardando* (slow down) marking has been added – to express delicacy, as if treading carefully on flowers.

Even a slight change in rhythm highlights the difference in emotion and imagery in the poetry. (See musical example 4-2-19)



Example:32 /4-2-19/ Excerpt from the song *"Aprile" ("April"),* measures *21–22*
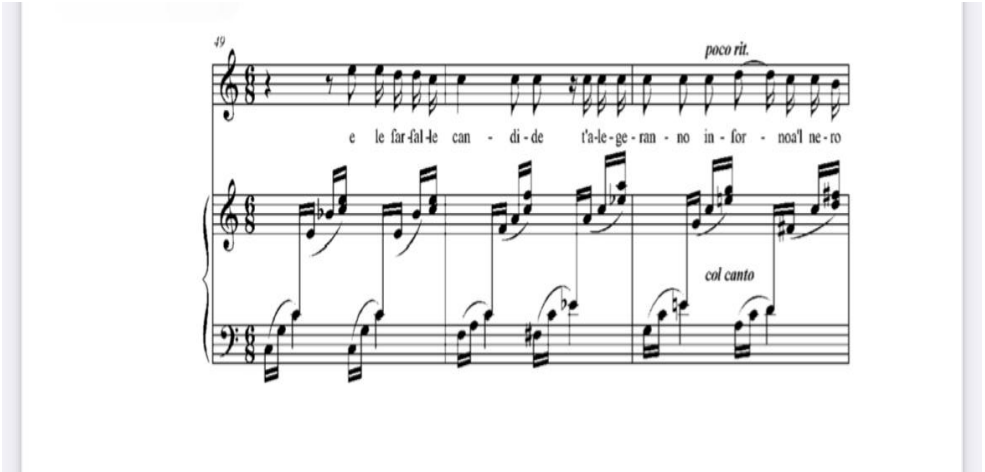
In measure 21, the phrase returns:

Non senti tu ne l'aria – Can't you feel it in the air?

Compared to measure 49 (see musical example 4-2-20) with the phrase: *"Non senti tu ne…",*

and the passage: "*White butterflies will flutter around your black hair"*
"Ele farfalle candide, t'aleggeranno in torno al nero crine," the difference is one eighth note—in the rhythm.

Compared to the first part, the second part sounds lighter and more delicate.
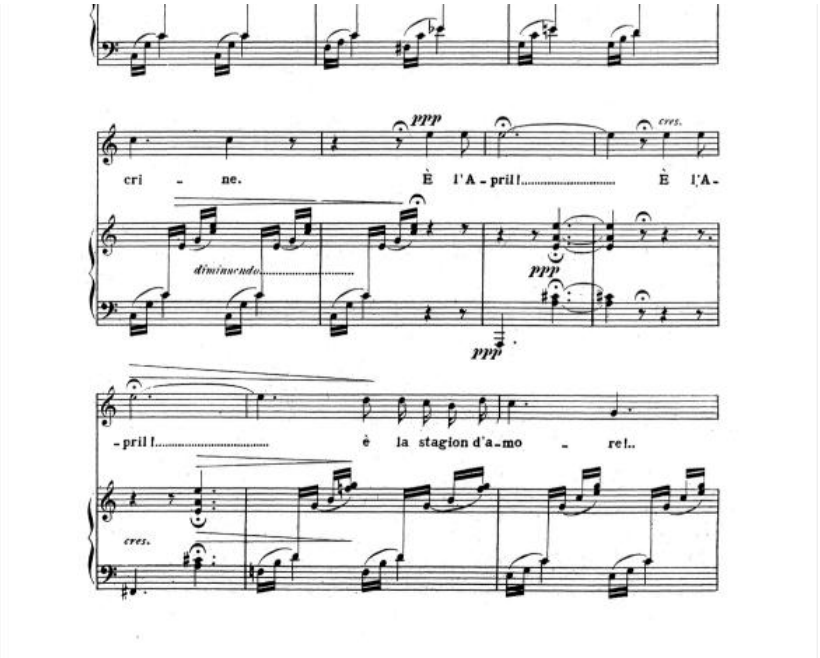


Example33 / 4-2-20/ Excerpt from the song *"Aprile" ("April"),* measures *49–51*

È l'april, è l'april	*It's April, it's April,*
È la stagion d'amore	*It is the season of love,*
Deh, vieni, o mia gentil	*Oh, come, my beloved,*
To the meadow in bloom	

The words themselves are so beautiful that they take your breath away.
The author expresses his feelings through images of nature—on the one hand, he marvels at the spring landscape; on the other, he expresses a longing for love.

In the piano accompaniment, continuous sixteenth notes in *arpeggios* symbolize the gentle April spring breeze, which soothes and stirs the singer's emotions.
The rhythm is fluid and lively, which supports the vocal expression.

To emphasize the main theme of the song *"È l'april…",* (see musical example 4-2-21), Tosti used a prolonged soft entry—marked *ppp* (*pianississimo*), meaning very, very softly.



Example34 / 4-2-21/ Excerpt from the song *" , 'Aprile'" ("April"),* measures 60–66

In Part A, the song begins with a description of early spring:

Along the quiet path, the white bushes have turned green; look—a beautiful garden, spring has come early.

This passage is very picturesque—it creates a peaceful, idyllic image that prepares us for the arrival of the main theme.

The music in this section is also gentle; it begins softly (*pp*), with slight variations,

which gives the impression of storytelling.

The combination of text and music makes the listener feel as if they were part of this peaceful spring landscape.

Then the question arises:

Would you run away with me? Will you come with me? – these repetitions emphasize the author's emotions and his longing for love.

Musical triplets add tension and contrast to the earlier tranquil description.

Section A' has a similar melody and rhythm to A, but the lyrics show that the author already knows his feelings are reciprocated:

Love has been reborn; the spring breeze brings this joyful news.

The emotions in this section are completely different from before—they are joy and fulfillment.

Changes in the music emphasize these emotions, and in the final two measures, ornamentations express happiness at the fulfillment of love—a symbol of the transition from desire to fulfillment.

4.2.5. Art song by Pier Adolfo Tirindelli – "O primavera " ("O, Spring!")

Background

"O primavera!" (*O, Spring…*) is a song composed by Pier Adolfo Tirindelli in 1911 for the famous Italian tenor Enrico Caruso (1873–1921) during his first stay in the United States. The lyrics were written by Olga Bonetti.

It is a joyful, emotionally charged piece that enthusiastically celebrates spring and asks it to bring love and joy to people's hearts.

The song is light, bright, and full of energy.

Composer's biography:

Pier Adolfo Tirindelli (born May 5, 1858, in Conegliano, Veneto – died February 6, 1937, in Rome) was an Italian violinist and composer of operas and songs.

He was a friend of Giacomo Puccini.

He later emigrated to the United States, where he became the orchestra director and violin teacher at the Cincinnati Conservatory.

His most famous composition is the song *"O primavera,"* dedicated to Enrico Caruso. Many famous singers have performed this piece—especially Carlo Bergonzi, who often recorded it and performed it in concerts.

Information about the piece:

"O primavera…" was written in the key of D major.
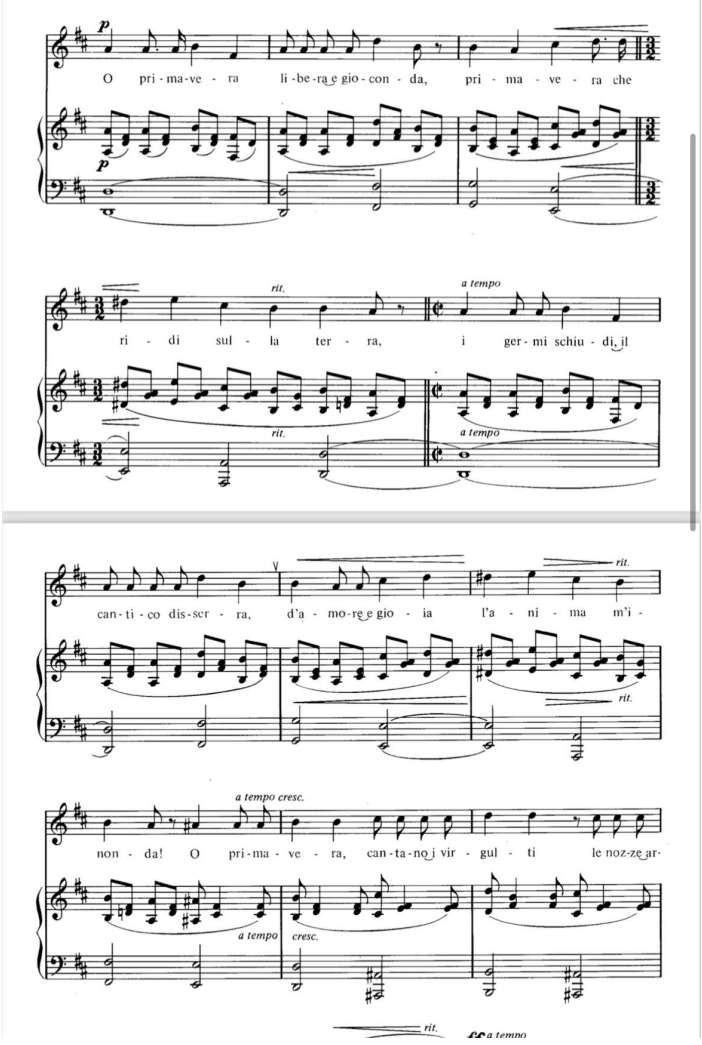
The time signature is 2/2 (*alla breve*), and the piece has a three-part A–B–A form.

Part A is marked *Con entusiasmo*—that is, with a touch of excitement and passion.

Basic structure	Prelude	A		B	A	
		a	b	b	a	b
Start and end sections	1–6	7–15	16–25	26–39	40–51	52–63
key	D major					

10 Table. Structure of the song "O primavera" ("O, Spring!")

In section A, subsection a, the piano part in the right hand features a flowing melody that conveys the joy and excitement associated with the arrival of spring. The composer divided this section into four phrases, each lasting four measures. In the third measure, the phrase reaches its climax, followed by a slowing down and calming, after which a new phrase begins. Section a expresses the hope, love, and joy that spring brings, so it should be played and sung in a joyful and energetic mood. However, care must be taken to ensure that the chords in the right hand of the piano are delicate and not too harsh. From the very first words, the singer should have a clear, gentle, and pleasant voice to fill the earth with new hope. (See musical example 4-2-22)
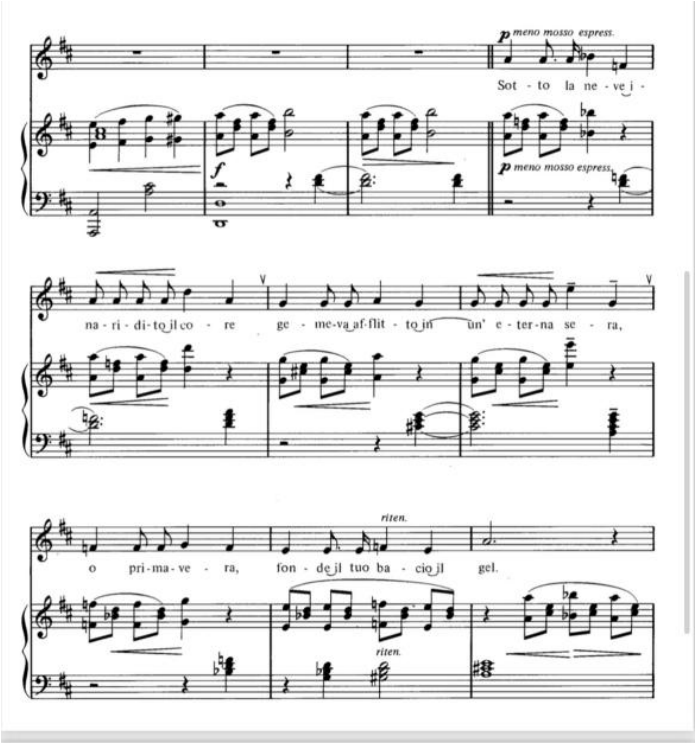


Example35 / 4-2-22/ Excerpt from the song *"O primavera" ("O, Spring!")* measures 7–17

Part B is the second verse of the text.

In Part B, the composer uses the key of D minor to suggest inner sadness and a wounded soul weeping alone on a winter night. Therefore, the key suddenly shifts from D major to the parallel D minor, and the mood turns somber. This entire section should be sung more slowly—*Meno mosso*—and with great expression—*Espressivo.* In this section, one should sing with melancholy. In fact, the most beautiful moment of the piece is precisely this central emotional shift (see musical example 4-2-24):

"Sotto la neve inaridito il core gemeva afflitto in un'eterna sera" – "Beneath the snow, the parched heart lamented sadly in eternal twilight."
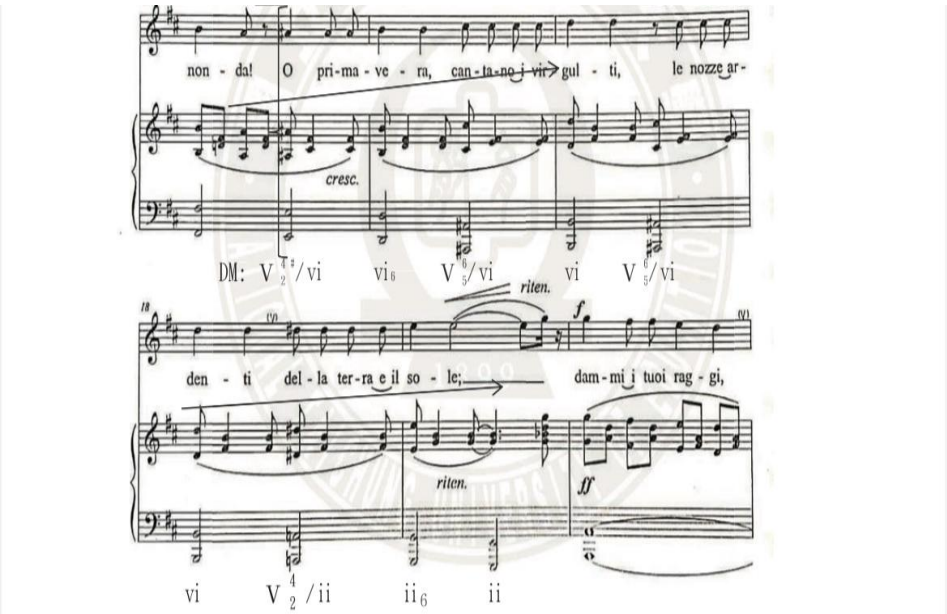


Example 36/ 4-2-23/ Excerpt *from* the song *"O primavera" ("O, Spring!") , measures 30–36*

The text tells us that when true love cannot be found, the heart becomes cold and dead, as if covered in snow. One can only grieve alone in the quiet hours of the night. That is why the last two lines contain a call to spring—a hope that it will bring love. The final delicate exclamation of this section sounds like a plea for spring to come quickly, for misfortune to depart, and for love and happiness to arrive as soon as possible. Once the sad emotions have subsided, the key resolves on a dominant chord common to both parallel keys in a half-cadence, concluding Part B and returning to the joyful mood of Part A.

In measure 40, the three-part form begins to repeat again. At this point, one must return to the original tempo from section A and return to the main theme lightly and briskly. However, the second time around, the emotions in section A should be even more joyful than before—symbolizing the end of sadness and the arrival of new hope. In section B, the tempo accelerates—*Più mosso*—until the end of the piece.

With its bright and joyful atmosphere, the piece expresses a longing for the arrival of spring and hope for a new beginning. Its lively and cheerful aura can fill listeners with hope.

Although the vocal melody shifts to a minor key, every note continues to rise, and the emotions grow increasingly intense. In this section, the text expresses the hope that spring will bring new life, as in the words: *"O Primavera, cantano i virgulti, le nozze ardenti della terra e il sole"*—*"O Spring, the young shoots sing, the fiery wedding of the earth and the sun"* (see musical example 4-2-23). In this phrase, the singer expresses passion and hope.



Example36 /4-2-24/ Excerpt from the song *"O primavera" ("O, Spring!") measures 54–59*

Chapter Four – Summary:

1. Chinese art songs based on classical poetry are primarily rooted in traditional Chinese culture, classical poems, or folk tales. Their purpose is to express, through music, thoughts and reflections on nature, life, history, and other aspects. It is not only a musical form but also a means of conveying culture and emotions.

   In contrast, European art songs place greater emphasis on the expression of personal emotions and on connections to literature, theater, and other art forms. These works often depict the inner world of the human being, the vicissitudes of emotion, and the relationship with nature. Their aim is to express universal human feelings.

2. Musical style and characteristics:

   Chinese art songs inspired by classical poetry have distinct national characteristics. They often employ traditional scales, rhythms, and modes, as well as rich harmonies and musical texture. They emphasize the variability of melody and rhythm and their harmony with the text.

   Chinese art songs are also often accompanied by traditional folk instruments. They are characterized by a strong influence of traditional Chinese music. Typical here is the pentatonic (five-note) scale, consisting of the notes: *gong, shang, jue, zhi, yu*—which correspond in Western music theory to the notes *C, D, E, G, A*—which underscores the national character of this music.

   Chinese art songs based on classical poetry also have an operatic style. This type of song is quite unique and original in Chinese music*: "xiqu*" ([50]). It combines traditional melodies with the vocal techniques of Chinese opera. Such songs possess not only the lyrical character typical of art songs but also the distinctive sound and melodic flavor characteristic of opera. There are many types of classical poetic songs in the Chinese operatic style—these are highly valuable and beautiful musical works.

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[50] *"Xìqǔ"* (Chinese opera) is a traditional Chinese performing art form that combines singing, recitation, acting, and elements of martial arts, and utilizes the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments. It is not only a form of theater but also an important part of Chinese culture and literature. Well-known genres include Peking Opera, Zhejiang Opera *("Yue"*), Henan Opera *("Yu"),* and Huangmei Opera.

3. The musical style of foreign art songs is more diverse. It encompasses genres such as Romanticism, Impressionism, and Modernism. In these types of songs, greater emphasis is placed on the integration of music with poetry, theater, and other art forms, as well as on the expression of personal emotions. The musical language and means of expression are rich and varied.

4. In summary, Chinese art songs based on classical poetry and foreign art songs differ in terms of cultural background, melody, musical style, lyrics, and language, but they are united by their artistic value, emotional expression, concern for humanity and society, and their role in intercultural exchange. These differences and similarities demonstrate the diversity of Eastern and Western musical culture and aesthetics.

The author of this work aims to help readers better understand and interpret various types of art songs. An art song is the perfect fusion of poetry and music. The poetry and music of every country have their own national characteristics. Through art songs, we can learn about other cultures and support intercultural exchange. Art songs will continue to evolve because—while language has boundaries—music knows no boundaries.

Conclusion

Chinese poetry and Western poetry are two different ways of expressing beauty and emotion. Traditional Chinese aesthetics emphasize *"yi jing"*—that is, mood and the deep harmony between humanity and nature. Poems, songs, and verses in Chinese culture reflect this relationship. *"Yi jing"* encompasses both emotions stemming from the artist's personal experiences and those arising from objective reality, elevated to a spiritual level.

Western poets tend to focus more on the psychology of the individual, on revealing desires and inner experiences, and their mode of expression is more direct and unambiguous. Chinese writers, on the other hand, value "restraint." When it comes to love, a Chinese person might say, "I live at the source of the Yangtze, and you at its mouth," while a German might say, "Come, my love, don't delay." Chinese writers like to describe states of mind through objects, symbolism, and metaphors. Without understanding these images, it is difficult to perceive their subtlety, let alone the depth hidden in the poetry.

Comparing and studying the vocal cultures of the East and West is a very broad artistic field. This work attempts to analyze Chinese and European art songs with a "spring" theme. The development of art songs in China and Europe has been traced, a textual and musical analysis has been conducted, and the methods of imagery and symbolism in "spring" songs have been compared. This, however, is merely the tip of the iceberg—a small fragment of the research field.

The author hopes that these comparisons and conclusions will be helpful to those who wish to better understand and interpret vocal works of Eastern and Western culture.
She has deep confidence that more experts and researchers will devote themselves to this field, offering valuable insights and contributing to the further development of Chinese art song.

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Appendix: PDF file with musical compositions

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3.Sang Tong – "*The Joy of Meeting – Flowers Have Fallen from Spring" (lyrics by Yu Li)-time 4:47*
4.Li Yinghai – *Spring Morning (lyrics by Meng Haoran)-time 5:14*
5.Yan Ji – *Spring in the Han Palace – The First Day of Spring (lyrics by Xin Qiji)-time 5:06*
6.Franz Schubert – *"Im Frühling" (lyrics by Ernest Schulz)-time 5:11*
7.Johannes Brahms – Die Mainacht (lyrics by Ludwig Hölty)-time 3:47
8.Georges Bizet – *Chanson d'avril (lyrics by Louis Bouilhet)-time 3:27*
9.Paolo Tosti – *Aprile (lyrics by Rocco Emanuele Pagliara)-time 4:06*
*10.*Pier Adolfo Tirindelli – *O primavera (lyrics by Olga Bonetti)-time 3:03*


1.chun hua qiu Yue he shi liao .p


2’ chun Jiang hua Yue ye.pdf


3’ lin hua xie le chun hong.pdf


4’ Chun xiao.pdf


5’ Han chu gong li chun ri .p


6’ SchubertF-D882_ImFruehling·


7’ Die Mainacht.pdf


8’ Chanson d'Avril 四月之歌 -


9’ Aprile 春天 - Tosti.pdf


10’ o primavera.pdf