

Analysis of the "Jasmine" Segment in "Turandot"

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Abstract: "Jasmine" is known as China's second national anthem. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was used as a representative of "China" by Puccini's opera "Turandot". This paper takes it as a perspective to analyze the "Jasmine" segment in "Turandot," knowing how the song has been adapted in its "return from abroad."

Keywords: Turandot, Jasmine.

1. Introduction

Giacomo Puccini (1858.12.22-1924.11.29) was one of the most excellent composers of Italian opera after Verdi. He wrote twelve operas in his lifetime, such as "Madama Butterfly," "Tosca," "La Bohème," and so on. "Turandot" is one of his greatest works and the last one. Puccini's operas in three acts based on a fairy tale by the famous Italian dramatist Carlo Gozzi were written by the playwright G. Adam in collaboration with the poet R. Simoni. One of the important themes of it use the theme melody of the Chinese folk song "Jasmine." In the whole work, the classic melody of "Jasmine" appears many times in various forms, such as chorus, ensemble, and solo, and is with different tones.

2. Puccini Meets "Jasmine"

Italian composer Giacomo Puccini derived his "Turandot" from a fairy tale drama. Set in China during the Yuan Dynasty, this book chronicles love and revenge. Turandot, the protagonist, is a nasty princess who demands any suitor wishing to wed her to solve three of her riddles precisely; else, he will be executed. Attracted by the princess's beauty, an exiled Tatar prince called Calaf chose to risk his life to win her heart one day. Turandot is not eager to keep her vow even though he solves every question. Calaf responded by challenges: Turandot would be ready to accept the death sentence if he could discover his name before morning. Turandot uses drastic methods, like interrogating Calaf's father Timur and his servant Liu and imprisoning them, in search of the prince's name. Liu decided at last to take his own life in order to guard Calaf's secret. Calaf feels Turandot's suffering even if he is furious at her actions. Calaf's bravery and compassion progressively affected Turandot as time went on; Calaf also told her his name. Turandot ultimately says Calaf's intention to be married rather than her name. It should be mentioned that although the prince's name is not stated explicitly in the real opera story, the evolution of the narrative reveals the alterations in the two's connection. The romantic exotic atmosphere and the theme of love supremacy in the whole play are perfectly combined to interpret a bizarre, tortuous, and exciting love story.

First published in "Xiao Hui Ji," a record finished in Daoguang's 17th year in the Qing Dynasty, "Jasmine" Originally titled "Rework Jasmine Tone," the song also goes under "Zhang Sheng Xi Yingying." Originating from a Qing

Dynasty popular song, the song evolved over time to acquire a clear Jiangnan style and became rather famous. Originally, this song chronicles the free love between Zhang Sheng and Cui Yingying, but over time the subject of the song progressively changed to use jasmine flowers to symbolize the beauty and longing of love. The songs capture the delicate psychology of choosing jasmine flowers, desiring to own them but worried about being found by others, and also depict people's inner longing for beautiful objects. This metamorphosis renders "Jasmine" a ballad more in line with the emotional universe of average people.

1 = D $\frac{2}{4}$ 江苏民歌
中速

3 2 3 5 | 6 5 1 6 | 5 3 5 6 | 1 2 3 | 2 1 6 1 | 5 - |

1. 好 一 朵 茉 莉 花, 好 一 朵 茉 莉 花,
2. 好 一 朵 茉 莉 花, 好 一 朵 茉 莉 花,
3. 好 一 朵 茉 莉 花, 好 一 朵 茉 莉 花,

5 3 5 6 | 1 2 3 | 1 6 5 | 5 2 3 5 3 2 | 1 6 1 | 3 2 1 | 2 3 |

满 园 花 开 香 也 香 不 过 它, 我 有 心
满 园 花 开 香 也 香 不 过 它, 我 有 心
满 园 花 开 香 也 香 不 过 它, 我 有 心

5 6 1 | 6 5 | 5 3 2 | 3 5 3 2 | 1 2 6 | 1 | 2 3 | 1 2 1 6 |

采 一 朵 戴, 看 花 的 人 旁 儿 要 将 我
采 一 朵 戴, 又 怕 来 年 发 芽 不 发
采 一 朵 戴, 又 怕 来 年 发 芽 不 发

1 6 | 5 :|| 3 2 1 | 2 3 | 5 6 1 | 6 5 | 5 3 2 | 3 5 3 2 |

骂 话 芽。
我 有 心 采 一 朵 戴, 又 怕

1 2 | 6 1 | 2 3 | 1 2 1 6 | 5 6 1 3 | 2 1 6 1 | 5 - ||

来 年 不 发 芽。

Based on the A Min Pentatonic, the folk ballad "Jasmine" has a one-part form and a four-sentence structure with declining notes in the phrases. The delicate and soft musical approach fits the special grace and sensitivity of Jiangnan women. Maybe it was this special appeal that drew the great Italian composer Giacomo Puccini to choose to include this beloved tune into his lifetime masterpiece "Turandot." This action not only covers the opera with a layer of beautiful oriental drapery but also gives the whole piece an ineffable softness and beauty, therefore enabling "Turandot" to blossom in the palace of music with a different brilliance.

Puccini hadn't been to China, so the most popular saying about the origin of "Jasmine" in his opera is that Baron Fassini Camossi, a former Italian diplomat in China, gave him a music box that play some Chinese music melodies as a gift, and the music box contained the melody of "Jasmine" before he created "Turandot." In the summer of 1920, Puccini visited

the home of his good friend Baron Fascini. When Baron Fascini learned that Puccini was going to write "Turandot" in Chinese theme, he took out a precious music box that he brought from China. The moment of opening the music box, the soft melody and full of oriental charm of "Jasmine" immediately subjugated Puccini's fastidious ears. When Puccini returned home, he decided to use "Jasmine" as the main melody to promote the development of the opera plot. As a result, "Jasmine" has become the most distinctive musical symbol with Chinese elements in the whole work.



Giacomo Puccini once expressed that he loved depicting ordinary people. He said, "I love nobody. I only want to write about nobody who is real, passionate, human, and can touch the heart deeply." Puccini's works tend to focus on the lives of people at the bottom of society and the portrayal of characters. Puccini was one of the representative figures of Italian realist opera between the 19th and 20th centuries. His work covers a wide range of themes, such as fairy stories, real life, exoticism and so on. He once told the playwright, "If give me a script like that, I will move the whole world." The core feature of Puccini's operas is the profound pursuit of the emotions of the characters and the concern for the destiny of nobody. Therefore, he created a series of female figures in the opera to show their morbidezza.

3. Presentation of "Jasmine" in the Opera

The melody of "Jasmine" appears in several key scenes in the opera "Turandot." When a group of children walk and sing, "If only the princess can come, the flowers will bloom," it is the first appearance of it in the first act. This music creates a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere, which is in stark contrast to the brutal scene of prince of Persia who is executed for not solve the riddle. This arrangement not only highlights the beauty of the melody but also deepens the feelings about the plot turning for the audience. Corresponding to the singing section, *Là, sui monti dell'Est* (see Figure 4).

Then, it is followed by Turandot's first appearance. The brass orchestra played the melody of "Jasmine" in unison, expressing the sacrosanct majesty of Princess Turandot (see Figure 5). Aria: *O giovinetto! Grazia, grazia!*

The third time is followed by an accompaniment to Calaf's refusal of his father's dissuasion. The first melody of "Jasmine" is played by the bass clarinet and bassoon (see Figure 6). Corresponding to the singing section: *Figlio, che fai?*

78

25 Andante $\text{♩} = 60$

Fl. Ob. C. I. Cl. in Si \flat Fg. in Fa Cr. in Fa

IL PRINCIPE
Non sen - ti? Il suo pro - fumo nel - l'aria! nel - l'a - ri - ma!

TIMUR
Fi - glio, che fai?

26 Andante $\text{♩} = 60$ senza Sordina

Vai. Vie. Vc. Cb.

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And then the melody of "Jasmine" appears when Calaf shouts "Turandot" three times in the argument of him with his father. It is also played by the brass and the brass leads the statement. But only the melody of the first line appears here and disappears in the final supplication of Turandot from the Persian prince (see Figure 7). Aria: Figlio, che fai?

Next, it is followed by the second act. After the officials have read the decree, Turandot appears, and then the melody of "Jasmine" rings again in children's chorus (see Figure 8). Aria: Popolo di Pechino!

248

248 Andantino $\text{♩} = 60$

Ob. Fl. Ob. Gsp. C. Ch. Col. A. I. A. II. 2 Sopr. in Mi \flat

COIRO (maschile in scena)
Ragazzi (interi ma sordi)
Sop. Dal de - ser - to al mar non o - di - mille voci sor - rar. Prin - ci - po - sa, scendia - me!
A. I. (a bocca chiusa)
A. II. (a bocca chiusa)
2 Sopr. (a bocca chiusa)
Sopr. (a bocca chiusa)

Vai. II. Vai. III. Vie. Vc. Cb.

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After Calaf answered the third question, the chorus greeted Calaf and praised him for answering all the questions correctly. At this time, "Jasmine" reappeared and became an ode to grandeur (see Figure 9). Aria: La mia vittoria

82

82 allargando **Largamente** affrett.

Ott. Fl. Ob. C. I. Cl. in Si \flat Cl. B. in Si \flat Fg. C. Fg. in Fa Cr. in Fa Trb. in Fa Trb. Trb. Cb. Tp. Tmb.

IL PRINCE DI PERSIA
doti! Tu - ran - doti!

Turandot

allargando **Largamente** div. uniti affrett. uniti

Vni. Vle. Vc. Cb.

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291

291 **Sostenuto** $\text{♩} = 60$

Ott. Fl. Ob. C. I. Cl. in Si \flat Cl. B. in Si \flat Fg. C. Fg. in Fa Cr. in Fa Trb. in Fa Trb. Trb. Cb. Tp. G. C. P. T. T. G. Ch.

COIRO (valla scena)
Ragazzi
Glo - ria, glo - ria, vinci - to - re! Glo - ria, glo - ria, vinci - to - re! Ti sor - ri - da - la - vi - ta!
Sopr. Contr.
Glo - ria, glo - ria, vinci - to - re! Glo - ria, glo - ria, vinci - to - re! Ti sor - ri - da - la - vi - ta!
O. I. O. II. C.
Glo - ria, glo - ria, vinci - to - re! Glo - ria, glo - ria, vinci - to - re! Ti sor - ri - da - la - vi - ta!
Bambini
Glo - ria, glo - ria, vinci - to - re! Glo - ria, glo - ria, vinci - to - re! Ti sor - ri - da - la - vi - ta!

Vni. Vle. Vc. Cb.

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In the opera "Turandot" which is a great chapter, Puccini combines the beautiful melody of "Jasmine" into it so that he can skillfully paint the multifaceted image of Princess Turandot six times. In addition to the first three wonderful presentations, the fourth scene is especially poignant: when Calaf pours his heart out to Turandot affectionately, the melody of "Jasmine" rings in an even more passionate manner with the support of the majestic chorus. It vividly portrays the unwavering image of the princess and the character characteristics are deepened more through the grant effect of the chorus. When Turandot doesn't hesitate about threatening the safety of Liuer to find out Calaf's name, the melody appears for the fifth time. At this time, the melody of "Jasmine" softly flows in the background music to expose the fragility and sensitivity buried under the princess's outward appearance. The sixth time of melody's appearance occurs at the moment when Calaf gently hugged and kissed Turandot. With the melody of "Jasmine" sounding melodiously, Turandot's previously icy heart softened gradually beneath the warmth of love, therefore it is a melting of the heart and a triumph of love. Apart from being the key clue to the development of the story, the elaborate arrangement of the melody excavates deeply and depicts delicately the complex and rich inner world of Princess Turandot, making the image of Turandot more perfect on stage.

4. The Use of "Jasmine" in the Opera

The excerpt of "Jasmine" is set in "Andantino", with the tempo of a crotchet beat equal to 72. The melody of "Jasmine" whoes division between the vocal and piano parts is explicit in this opera is different from the melody of the Jiangsu folk song "Jasmine." The melody part is the statement and development of the theme motive, while the piano part is the accompaniment of the block chord texture.

The opening interval motive of the melody is a repetition of the minor third and the major second. In terms of harmony, the melody is the B-flat Min Pentatonic.

B-flat Min Pentatonic

The piano section below is the E-flat Mixolydian mode.

E-flat Mixolydian

Puccini applied the compound harmonic configuration method to coordinate melody and harmony. The melody in the first four measures of this part is B-flat Min Pentatonic while the harmony is E-flat Mixolydian mode. The second measure employs traditional Chinese pentatonic mode and Western

modulation "mixed and matched" to create a hybrid sound form and bring fresh acoustic effects; the compound harmonic configuration techniques with diverse melodies and harmonies are also used here.

As the melody progresses to the long note, the piano excerpts the theme motive in the treble pitch, where there is both a repetition of the melody of the second interval and the echo of the tertian.

In terms of the range, the piano part is a statement of the bass pitch and the treble pitch, and the statement of the melody part is in the alto pitch. The range is very rich.

Measure 9 is the exposition of the segment.

At this time, the melody is the continuation and development of the second and the third from the beginning theme motive and the rhythm part is the amplification and metamorphosis of the theme motive.

In measure 13, the rhythm part of the melody has a dot rhythmic metamorphosis, and then in measure 14, the perfect fourth appears for the first time which is above three degrees. The first phrase ends with E-flat.

In the next development of the melody, in addition to the second and the third, the fourth which first appears in measure 14 is also added.

In measure 21, the left hand of the piano part pushes the mood of the segment to the climax in the descending octave stepwise motion. At the same time, the left-hand part and the right-hand melodic part form the third relationship to stick to the interval degrees of the theme motive.

Here the melodic voice has a partial differential note—the Qingjue A-flat. If it is the melody in the traditional Chinese folk song "Jasmine," the A-flat should be the B-flat here.

In this section, considering the pitch of the melody combined with the piano part, the mode briefly shifts to D-flat Ionian.

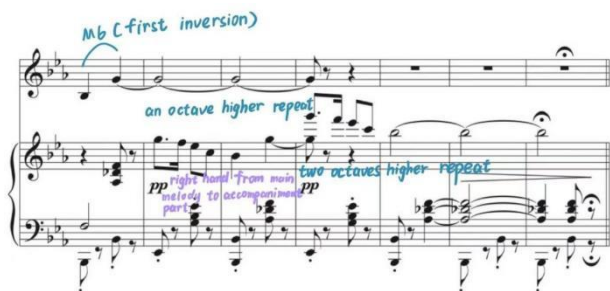


The melody part of measure 26 is the diminished rhythm of dot in measure 13.



At measure 28, it is the coda whose material is an excerpt, repetition and metamorphosis of the theme motive.

In measure 31, the right hand part of the piano is the theme melody of the excerpt and the repetition of an octave higher. Then the melody is repeated again in an octave higher accenting the ending of the melody part. At this point, the segment ends.



Looking at the whole melody layout, the traditional Chinese folk song "Jasmine" has a common form of the "Qi"- "Cheng"- "Zhuan"- "He"; the melody is beautiful and logical; the theme material of this segment is concentrated; the motive is logical; and the theme motive is closely stated, repeated, and developed. The melody is beautiful and audible. The reason why "Jasmine" was first favored by Westerners is: "First, its pentatonic scale has distinctive national characteristics; second, his smooth melody and symmetrical structure full of periodic repetition can adapt to Western aesthetic habits." Puccini's composition enhances the harmonic hues of the work by combining pentatonic melodies with ancient Chinese musical elements into the Western seven-tone natural major and minor key system, therefore providing the listener with a fresh hearing experience. Puccini therefore included Eastern components into Western opera, so enabling Western listeners to grasp and value Chinese musical qualities and culture. In the opera "Turandot," the introduction of the Jiangsu folk song "Jasmine" is not only due of musical composition and technical considerations but also of promote the exchange and integration of Eastern and Western cultures and of show the dialogue and mutual adaptation between many civilizations.

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