

# Historical and Stylistic Patterns of Vocal Work Interpretative Implementation

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**Abstract:** The article examines historical and stylistic regularities of the interpretative realization of a vocal work as a complex process that combines knowledge of the national and historical context, the peculiarities of the composer's thinking and performing traditions. The relevance of the study is due to the need for a deeper understanding of the stylistic foundations of vocal performance in the conditions of modern interpretative practice, which requires the performer's versatility and the ability to work with the repertoire of different national schools. The aim of the article is to identify historical and stylistic factors that determine the peculiarities of the interpretation of a vocal work, as well as to generalize the specifics of the leading national vocal schools in the context of their influence on performing practice. The methodological basis of the study is a systematic, historical, and stylistic analysis, a comparative approach to the study of vocal traditions, as well as a generalization of scientific works on the history of vocal art. As a result of the study, it was determined that the success of the interpretative implementation of a vocal work directly depends on taking into account the historical and stylistic

context of the era, the genre features of the musical material, the national compositional tradition and the technological parameters of vocalization. The characteristic features of the Italian, French, German, and East Slavic vocal schools are summarized, and the specifics of the Chinese vocal tradition in dialogue with European academic singing are outlined. It is shown that national vocal schools are formed under the influence of linguistic-phonetic, cultural-historical, and aesthetic factors and serve as an important basis for performing interpretation. It is concluded that the interpretation of a vocal work is a complex cultural-semantic process, which combines historical, national, and technological factors that ensure the authenticity and artistic persuasiveness of the performance result -

**Keywords:** sound context of the era, interpretative implementation, composer's style, vocal and musical creativity, national school, performing activity.

## Introduction

Discussion of musical style always reveals the historical nature of this definition. The historical approach to the study of style manifests itself as the most fruitful in the field of questions about the genesis of a particular style direction and the transition from one style formation to another (i.e., about style contiguity). In other words, it is precisely the “value priorities of style from the point of view of the interaction of generally accepted style norms and the author’s individuality” (Zhang Miao, 2019, p. 45) that are indicative of the peculiar aesthetic dominants of a certain era.

The study of musical style has always been closely associated with the historical nature of artistic thinking and cultural development. In musicology, style is traditionally understood as a complex system of expressive means that reflects both the aesthetic priorities of a particular era and the individuality of a composer or performer. Within the field of vocal performance, the issue of stylistic awareness becomes especially significant, as the interpretation of a vocal work requires not only technical mastery but also a deep understanding of historical, cultural, and national contexts.

Researchers in the field of psychology of art and musical abilities of the individual, considering the issue of performing creativity, often understand style as a category of artistic thinking, determined by personal consciousness. Such a view provides tools for effective analysis of the semantic component of music, assessment of individual composer’s thinking and features of performing technology, since it indirectly indicates the features of the artist’s musical and mental process (Zhang Miao, 2019, p. 44). Based on the fact that style, in its performance refraction, is always a complexly mediated phenomenon, understanding style as a category of artistic thinking allows discovering key points in determining the substantive and semantic functions of musical style, as the initial stage of interpretative implementation in performance activity.

Modern vocal practice is characterized by the expansion of repertoire boundaries and the growing necessity for performers to engage with works belonging to different stylistic traditions and national schools. Under such conditions, the problem of historically informed interpretation acquires particular relevance (Sansom, 2023). The performer is required to reconstruct not only the musical text itself but also the broader stylistic environment in which the work was created. This includes knowledge of the composer’s stylistic language, genre characteristics, national vocal traditions, and technological aspects of vocal production that are historically conditioned.

The concept of interpretation in vocal art should therefore be regarded as a multidimensional phenomenon that combines analytical thinking, historical awareness, and practical performance skills. The stylistic features of national vocal schools - Italian, French, German, Eastern European, and others - have been shaped under the influence of linguistic, cultural, and aesthetic factors. Their interaction has resulted in the formation of a unified yet diverse European academic vocal tradition. At the same time, contemporary globalization processes encourage intercultural dialogue, particularly evident in

the interaction between European vocal traditions and the vocal culture of China. In this context, the historical-stylistic factor becomes a theoretical and practical foundation for the interpretation of vocal works. Understanding the stylistic patterns of different epochs and national traditions enables performers to achieve greater artistic authenticity and interpretative accuracy, thereby enhancing the expressive and semantic potential of vocal performance.

The presented article proposes a systematic analysis of historically distinct features of national vocal schools for substantiated conclusions on the stated topic, highlighting the dependence of the specifics of the vocal school on the national-historical context, substantiating the performing interpretation as a derivative of the national composer's stylistics.

For substantiated conclusions on the stated topic, a systematic analysis of historically isolated features of national vocal schools is proposed; highlighting the dependence of the vocal school's specifics on the national-historical context, as well as substantiation of performing interpretation as a derivative of the national composer's stylistics.

## historical perspective of musical knowledge

From the historical perspective of musical knowledge, the concept of style is expanded to understanding the genre-specific nature of a particular musical material, in other words, to defining a genre as a stable way of connecting sound and meaning. This is primarily about the parameters of composition, including ways of structuring sound through a musical text, including through the musical and linguistic features of a particular work (Zhang Miao, 2019, p. 45-46). Of course, these parameters are determined by the external stylistic context of the era, as a historical reflection of stable norms of musical thinking.

It should be noted that for an artist - a composer or performer, a certain opposition to the stable norms of the era is not a rare phenomenon. (Akhildev, P., & Prasad, R. R., 2026) This is understandable, since an artist is an artist in order to go beyond the generally accepted and anticipate what at a given historical stage goes beyond stable norms. In the study of Zhang Miao, it is noted that the 20th century poses particularly difficult tasks for the stylistic typology of music, because at this time the activity of individual authorial styles far exceeds any stylistic processes that normalize general ones, sets its own conditions for the genre organization of musical creativity. According to the author, "composer and performer poetics gain a high degree of independence", however, she also notes that "composer and performer thinking cannot, in principle, completely free themselves from general stylistic regulations and national priorities, from genre traditions, even recent ones, since a system of logical rules is always necessary, which can be relied on and which can be recognized as musical one" (Zhang Miao, 2019, p. 48).

Thus, the historical-stylistic factor of the success of the vocal work stage interpretation, in our opinion, is, in a certain sense, the theoretical basis of the interpretation. The fact is that the historical-stylistic aspect covers the so-called preliminary preparation for the creative and practical actions of the vocalist. In order to begin the practical mastery of a vocal work, it is necessary to know the historical context, which determines both the vocal-technical and performing manner of embodying the work on stage.

By historical context, we mean not only knowledge and understanding of the socio-historical circumstances of the era in which the work was written, the specifics of the composer's personality, the special "sound" context of the specified period, the stylistic preferences of the time, but also the attraction of the composer's context of the vocal work to a certain national vocal school (it is known

that certain differences in vocal schools were formed, not least against the background of the composer's creativity of this period in certain national and religious conditions).

The professional-technological component is related (albeit indirectly) to the historical context. It implies understanding the tools for implementing technological vocal tasks. For example, works from the era of the so-called beautiful singing - *bel canto* - require a special technology of vocal performance. Modern vocalists have dubbed it an "instrumental" sounding of the voice, although according to the Italian school, such a definition is not entirely correct. The "instrumental" manner is characterized by the absence of a sensual timbre color of voices.

As for the quality of vocalization, the repertoire of ancient composers of *bel canto* works is not without reason considered educational in vocal training. In the works of ancient composers, the so-called "convenient" vocalization is provoked by the very structure of vocal phrases, tessitura features, which allow practicing certain skills in a range convenient for a beginner vocalist. Moreover, it should be especially noted that German vocal music – Bach, Handel, etc. – requires a slightly different quality of sound compared to Italian music, and even more so French. Such a difference is a consequence of a certain difference in vocal schools in Europe, due to national and language characteristics.

This topic is presented in great detail in the study of Yu Xinya (2024), where a comparative analysis of the specifics of the vocal schools of Europe and China is presented separately. Thus, the study indicates the features of each of the national European vocal schools and substantiates their specific accents.

We will try to briefly explain the stylistic features of each vocal school in Europe. The purpose of this structuring is to make the vocalist-performer aware of the need to take into account the specifics of the vocal material from the point of view of its national compositional and methodological and technological affiliation. It is not about the vocalist' changing the manner of singing every time he takes up a new work by a new composer - a representative of a certain national tradition. But for the successful implementation of the performing concept, we consider this knowledge and understanding of the differences in vocalization caused by national specifics to be necessary. These are not only historical parallels, but also a certain adjustment of the stylistics of vocal reproduction of the material taking into account the performing traditions of this material. Sometimes, knowledge of the vocal style of a certain era significantly influences a singer's repertoire choice.

## National vocal schools: key peculiarities

The classical, main vocal school of academic singing is considered to be the Italian school. It should be noted that within the generally accepted postulates of the Italian vocal school, there are certain "small" branches – the Great Bologna School, the Neapolitan, Venetian, Milanese, and Roman vocal schools. These, so to speak, small subdivisions of the general Italian vocal tradition are separated due to the fact that each school was represented by its own galaxy of composers, who had their own preferences for the presentation of the vocal line. However, all the differences are not significant and are subject to the generally recognized principles of the Italian vocal tradition.

The *bel canto* style of singing – beautiful singing, as it is defined throughout the world, was formed on the basis of a conglomerate of folk, church, and secular aspects of the musical art of Italy, and became the main vocal style of the new European vocal genre – opera.

It is interesting to analyze what were the main factors influencing the formation of this particular style of vocal performance. First, the basis of the melody of Italian music was folk songs with their flexible melody, rhythmic and dynamic diversity. On the other hand, which is quite understandable, the Italian language, its phonetic specificity is a very important factor in the formation of a special vocal

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manner inherent in the bel canto style. Italian pronunciation is based on: a special manner of doubling

sonorous consonants, the correct pronunciation of which requires preparation in the sounding of vowels - a high raising of the palate; smooth pronunciation of sound combinations, due to the fact that the Italian language does not have complex sound compounds, and exaggerated sharp articulation is not required; the sounding of consonant sounds is significantly facilitated and softened due to the exaggerated presence of vowels in the speech palette (Yu Xinya, 2024, p. 22).

Thanks to these phonetic features, which formed the stable principles of classical sound design, the Italian vocal school is considered the standard of academic sounding, and is still regarded the basis of all national vocal schools in Europe. The highest period of flowering of the Italian vocal school is considered to be the 17th-18th centuries. That is why the works of Italian composers of this period serve as the methodological basis of vocal education to the present day. And that is why the Italian vocal school, in addition to its canonical name *bel canto*, which characterizes the sound quality of vocalization - beautiful (harmonious) singing, is characterized by an increased level of vocal virtuosity (within the Italian vocal tradition, the culture of virtuoso singing of castrati singers reached its greatest flowering) (Xu et al., 2025).

For the stylistic performance awareness of the singer, it is necessary to recall the cardinal changes in the understanding of the technique and purpose of vocal art at the end of the 19th century, namely, the formation of operatic action as a unity of music and drama. Accordingly, the requirements for singers changed - from purely vocalization for the sake of vocalization, the aesthetics of operatic art changed to the aesthetics of musical and dramatic theater. It is believed that this was the end of the *bel canto* era, but the appearance of the so-called Verdi drama did not abolish the classical guidelines of the old Italian school. It only opened a significant direction in musical art, which was determined by the historical and social processes of the late 19th - early 20th centuries. Thus, Verdi's repertoire put forward significantly different requirements for singers from vocalization in the *bel canto* style:

- significant tension of the vocal apparatus, due to the greater saturation of the score;
- the advantage of the sound "color" over the constant natural timbre, which is due to the opera dramatic component;
- the expressiveness of the voice upper register, thanks to which the vocal depiction of the culminating moments of the opera occurs;
- a significant increase in articulation in singing;
- the use of declamation in the vocal parts, etc.

It is not without reason that the modern Italian vocal school, unlike the ancient masters of vocal training, actively uses the upper part of the vocal range, employs training exercises of a wide range, including the extreme sounds of the main register. However, the main tradition of the Italian school is preserved - the requirement for a lowered position of the larynx when singing.

Many researchers have singled out the Italian vocal school' postulates, which we summarize as follows: lowered position of the larynx; maximum resonance of the singer's physique, with a priority for the sound of the high singing formant; solid attack of the sound; rounded "covered" sound in all parts of the range; the predominance of the chest-diaphragmatic type of breathing (Ngobeni et al., 2025).

Thus, summing up, we emphasize that in mastering, and even more so in performing, vocal works by Italian composers, it is necessary to take into account the historically determined stylistics of

vocalization and the performing features of a particular socio-cultural era. Separately, we note that we

do not take into account the experience of some modern directors regarding the absolute reversal of traditional performing “fasteners” of vocal stage works. Tyagi et al. (2026) One should note that non-compliance with the traditions of academic vocal art is possible only in the performing aspect, because such “innovations” in singing technology will significantly reduce the quality of sound production in general, and may also negatively affect the health of the singer’s vocal apparatus. Therefore, technological innovations in this sense are almost impossible, because they cause significant resistance in vocalists and, as a result, do not allow for the qualitative implementation of the author’s material in stage performance.

As for the French national vocal school, the basis of its formation was still reliance on Italian vocalization. But thanks to the peculiarities of French pronunciation and the traditions of French theatrical art, the French vocal school emerged as a self-sufficient creative phenomenon, both from the technological side and from the expressive palette of singing. Thus, the initial attempts at French classical opera by Jean-Baptiste Lully were characterized by the presence of affective declamation (which was a consequence of the dramatic art that was very popular among the French, namely, theatrical productions of the tragedies of Corneille and Racine) (Gnyd, 1997, p. 51).

It should be noted that namely the French vocal school gave the greatest diversity in understanding the principles of vocal pedagogy. The book *“The Art of Singing”* by Jean Bérard first presented the views of leading French teachers of solo singing. Let us emphasize that technological vocal guidelines are presented in this work in a rather metaphorical language, which describes the human voice as an instrument, and segments of vocal technique are explained by comparison with the properties of instruments, for example: the lips are able to vibrate like strings; air plays the role of a bow; the muscles of the sternum and lungs are similar to the hands of a violinist who moves a bow; the larynx is mobile - if it is inherent in it to move as it rises along the sound scale, then it is necessary to use its natural ability (let us recall that in the Italian vocal school, raising the larynx is unacceptable). There, the diaphragmatic type of breathing for singing is also indicated, which we meet later in the “canonical” from the point of view of vocal pedagogy. works of F. Lamperti and M. Garcia (Gnyd, 1997, p. 104).

Later, other methodological recommendations appeared – *“Method of the Paris Conservatory”* (1803). It is significant that this manual recommends the methodological principles of the old Italian school of the 17th–18th centuries, which were based on chest breathing. However, the voice registers – chest and head – have already been defined, and for high female voices – chest, middle, and head. Interestingly, it was recommended to form the main register of a high female voice based on directing the sound into the frontal and nasal sinuses, which was not the case in the classical Italian school. This feature is justified as a “continuation” of the specific pronunciation inherent in the French language (Gnyd, 1997, p. 105). We cite Yu Xinya’ remarks on the specifics of vocal breathing in different national schools, which are determined by the peculiarities of pronunciation in a particular linguistic tradition (Xinya, 2024, p. 26).

The French vocal school in its historical development constantly added new conclusions and new methodological achievements. Thus, J.L. Dupre entered the history of vocal art as a reformer of singing technique (his *“Art of Singing”* (1846) was approved by the expert in vocal technique and the outstanding vocal composer G. Rossini). Dupre insisted on the use of not only a hard attack of sound (which is a feature of the Italian vocal school), but also a soft sound attack; he emphasized the need to form a homogeneous sound over the entire range, and as the resonator characteristic of this sound he

envisaged both the main and chest sounding; also in the formation of this mixed sound he determined

the mechanism of covering (darkening) of the sound (Gnyd, 1997, p. 113). We will add that all these postulates are actively used in modern methods of vocal education.

The merit of another master - J.B. Faure - was the use of deep abdominal breathing. His other guidelines, namely the low position of the larynx and the firm attack of the sound, correspond to the guidelines of the ancient Italian school (Gnyd, 1997, p. 117).

Separately, it is necessary to highlight the figure of Manuel-Garcia - the son, who is still considered an outstanding vocal educator, and his work *"Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing"* represent a kind of generalization of the vocal principles of the old Italian and new French vocal schools (Gnyd, 1997, p. 114). The provisions specified by Manuel-Garcia still serve as the methodological basis of academic vocal education. The main provisions are as follows: vocalization is the result of the coordinated work of the entire vocal apparatus; the predominance of diaphragmatic breathing in vocalization; changes in timbre are reduced to the basic ones - light (clair) and dark (sombree); the need for a firm attack of sound (coup de glotte); vocal tasks are performed in comfortable tonalities; the prohibition of abuse in classes of the upper parts of the range; the need for individual differentiation of anatomical and physiological features of the vocal apparatus.

However, the historical context of the 20th century put forward new views on vocal technology. Thus, Raoul Duhamel emphasizes the need to form the so-called "emotional" timbre, capable of sensually conveying changes in a person's internal state. Such attention to the emotional component of the voice is due to the historical and cultural features of the era, namely the two directions of art development: the ascent from romanticism to realism and the development of modernism. As for realism, at the beginning of the 20th century, one of the most significant achievements of art was the theory of stage art by K. Stanislavski, which for many years determined the paths of development not only for theatrical, but also for musical art, in particular - vocal.

## Shifts within the era of modernism

The development of modernism "provoked" a change in musical language, marked a turn to new ways of organizing the harmonic, melodic, sound, and rhythmic aspects of music. Thus, E. Tarasti artistically and mathematically defined modernism in music as "the dissolution of traditional tonality and the transformation of the very foundations of tonal language, the search for new models in atonalism, polytonalism, or other forms of altered tonality", and D. Albright - as "testing the limits of aesthetic construction" (Moss, 2023). All musical trends of the turbulent time - the beginning of the 20th century, one way or another, were born at the break of the very attitude to the subject of aesthetic comprehension (in our case - musicalization): from the divine nature of man and prayer to the Lord to the lowest manifestations of human nature, etc.

Naturally, such social and ethical explosions gave rise to other approaches in vocal art. Thus, the method of voice training of R. Duhamel is fundamentally based on increased attention to the immanent process of creativity and active involvement of the emotional component, namely: incredible combinations of vowels and consonants across the entire range of the voice; changing the duration and power of the sound; allowing for variations in the rhythmic pattern depending on changes in the emotional state, due to which the singer's voice acquires a certain potential for sonority and timbre color (Gnyd, 1997, p. 121). In this context, it is necessary to mention the founder of musical impressionism in the French vocal school, Claude Debussy, who is called the master of sound painting.

Debussy's vocal language added subtle psychological colors to the expressiveness of his singing, which was reflected in his incredible sensitivity in the pronunciation of words and the perfection of his vocal-

musical declamation (Gnyd, 1997, p. 119). It is precisely such sound and semantic features that permeate all French vocal music from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day.

Thus, we will note the features of the French vocal school (in general time coverage), which the performer must definitely take into account in the process of mastering the material of French composers and building the figurative-semantic component of the interpretation of works. They are as follows: the use of hard and soft sound attack; division of the voice into registers; formation of a mixed voice register through smoothing of registers by softening and amplifying the strength of the sound; deep abdominal breathing; low position of the larynx; impeccable vocal-musical declamation; increased sensitivity to the pronunciation of the word; education of "emotional timbre" (Gnyd, 1997, p. 119-121).

We emphasize that many specific features of the French national vocal school are due to the peculiarities of French pronunciation, as well as imitation and transformations of historical and cultural processes of society.

A separate phenomenon in vocal methodology is the German vocal school, which was formed later than the Italian and French ones, namely only in the middle of the 19th century. The German vocal school is inextricably linked with the name of the outstanding composer Richard Wagner, whose ideas were supported by J. Gay, F. Schmitt, and J. Stockhausen.

The German vocal school is characterized by an instrumental style of voice sounding. This is based on national-religious traditions that originate in the Reformation era. It was folklore that became the basis of the Lutheran monophonic chorale and determined the aesthetics of the human voice sounding, characteristic of German music. This does not mean at all that German singing was devoid of sensuality, but this sensuality had its own "national-religious" content. Indeed, thanks to J.-S. Bach, the singing voice was still considered a musical instrument, but an instrument that is "endowed with exceptional expressive capabilities" (Grow & Roth, 2024). This approach was reflected in the vocal works of J.-S. Bach.

Excessive overtones are unacceptable for this vocalization style. Also, this manner of singing is quite limited, of course in the modern sense, in dynamics and nuance. Moreover, the works of ancient German composers are distinguished not only by their limited nuance. Vocalization during this period was characterized by nuance of the "arched" type – such nuance involves changes not in a phrase or sentence, but in large fragments. They seem to sound like some kind of sound-dynamic "terraces". The most indicative in this sense are the arias of Bach, for example, the aria for soprano from cantata No. 68. The work is based on the rondo form – constant repetitions of one theme, completely identical or with slight changes. Thus, in the specified aria, large musical periods sound in a single dynamics with a single loudness of the voice. So, the nuance of this music is significantly different from the modern understanding of this process in singing.

As for the figure and understanding of vocal sound by R. Wagner, it was his "intervention" in Italian bel canto that was reflected in the final formation of the national German school of singing with its understanding of the voice as "an instrument woven into the orchestral fabric" (Brito, 2022). We add the famous statement by R. Wagner regarding the features of national vocal schools in Europe: "For an Italian, music serves love, for a Frenchman, it serves society, while a German deals with it as a science. ... it can be paraphrased more successfully: an Italian is a singer, a Frenchman is a virtuoso, a German is a musician" (Popova, 2020). Of course, this statement is somewhat far from objectivity, although it still conveys the general features of different national vocal schools.

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Much of the German school of singing has become part of the general thesaurus of academic vocal art, which is accepted as the standard of singing today. For example, the German school is known

outside its country as the “ghost tone school”, the founder of which was Friedrich Schmitt. He, like Wagner, denied the Italian method of vocal education and insisted on the need to create a separate German vocal school, which would embody the specifics of German opera music and the phonetics of the German language. Speaking on what is the “ghost tone school” about, one should note that the basis of this technique is to identify the best tone of voice sound (actually the “ghost tone”) and adjust the singer’s entire vocal range on its basis. Another important difference from the Italian manner is the denial of the “covered sound” in the upper part of the range. The special phonetics of the German language turned out to be important in this approach (Nafisi, 2014). Y. Gay adds to the formation of the “phantom tone”, which he defines as the “natural tone”, the importance of finding this free sound of the voice not only in singing, but also in spoken sounding. There are three stages in the formation of a homogeneous sound throughout the entire range – finding a natural tone, a normal tone, and an ideal tone. A natural tone is characterized by a natural sound on the most convenient vowel, ease of emission. After finding a natural tone, the sound of a normal tone is mastered, by which Y. Gay understands the character of the sound flowing throughout the entire range. Gay considers the ideal tone to be one from which both the singer and the audience receive physical and aesthetic pleasure. Among the main vocal settings of Gay, one can note: diaphragmatic breathing; lowered position of the larynx; “darkening” of the sound of the vowels “O” and “U”; avoiding abuse of the extreme sounds of the range; development of vibrational sensations that contribute to the combination of chest and head resonators (Gay as cited in Zavalova, 2024).

As one can see, almost all positions somehow echo the Italian and French vocal schools. But, the most striking feature of “German” singing is the “metallic” sound of the voice. And here it is recommended to keep the vibrational sensations in the upper part of the face: the maxillary cavity, in the bridge of the nose, and the frontal sinuses. Namely these cavities give the sound a characteristic “metallic” shade. And Gay considers possible the combination of the head and chest resonators of vocal sound with the help of a nasal resonator, which he calls the “golden bridge”. However, he warns that the use of a nasal resonator is not an end in itself, but only a way to achieve a homogeneous sound of the voice with head and chest resonance. It is characteristic of the German school that Gay uses consonant sounds to master the feeling of a particular group of resonators. The German vocal school (school of the ghost tone) is characterized by an arc-shaped direction into the resonating cavities of the head. In addition, it is characteristic to base vocal exercises on “dark” vowels.

Another representative of the German vocal school, a professional singer and teacher, J. Stockhausen, being a supporter of the “ghost tone” school, synthesized the Italian and French vocal schools in his methodological recommendations based on the phonetics of the German language (Shulyar, 2012). Thus, he believed that it was not vocalizations that contributed to the correct mastery of vocalization skills, but solfeggio exercises that involved the use of consonant sounds in singing. It was such exercises, according to J. Stockhausen, that most contributed to the correct functioning of the larynx – its low position and the removal of excessive clamping in vocalization. He recognized diaphragmatic breathing as the optimal type of breathing.

Thus, regarding the features of the German vocal school, we can identify the following provisions that distinguish its specificity among European vocal schools, namely: conscious concentration of sound formation in the nasal bridge, maxillary cavity and frontal sinuses; basing vocal exercises on the “dark sound” of vowels and the mandatory use of consonants to form correct vocalization (Xinya, 2024, p. 32). We draw attention to the fact that these positions indirectly reflect the specifics of the German

language as one of the defining components of the formation of the national vocal school.

As to East Slavic vocal school, its characteristic features are the inclusion of almost all the achievements of European national vocal schools with the addition of simplicity and sincerity of performance, therefore, the ability to combine vocal mastery with the emotionality of the living word and the mastery of dramatic expressiveness. We find confirmation in the statement of I. Rupin, the owner of a private vocal school at the beginning of the 19th century: "Why is music applied to words, if not to enhance their expressiveness and infuse them with more passion. The first condition for a singer is the soul, the second is the voice" (Chapman, 2017).

In the methods of various vocal schools in the East Slavic space, one can find followers of both the German school of "phantom tone" and supporters of the French method, which was based on the old Italian vocal school. Interestingly, the French and Italian vocal schools played an important role in the very process of the formation of the East Slavic school of singing. Both approaches assume concentricity (which will manifest itself in the vocal method of M. Glinka, who relied on the German "phantom tone"), but the influence of the French school brought a freer manner of vocalization to the East Slavic background. As for the features of the performing component, the East Slavic vocal school historically developed based on the synthesis of Orthodox singing art, folk song, and *bel canto* melodiousness (Xinya, 2024, p. 36).

Thus, the point is that all vocal schools of the European continent, in the development of generalized universal academic vocal skills, today somehow correlate with each other, especially in modern conditions of the labor market - the requirements for a vocalist to perform any repertoire, not limited to one style of vocal music, even in the direction of academic music making. For example, today a singer performs German chamber music, and tomorrow from this strict ascetic style he plunges into the score of vocal music of "verists" and Verdi's parts, in which in technological expression the timbre of sound is brought to the forefront of vocalization, subordinated primarily to the semantics of the image, and only then - to classical vocalization, as understood by a certain national vocal school.

Thus, based on the understanding that the national vocal school is always a certain reflection of the national compositional tradition, we note that for the accurate interpretation of vocal material by a singer, one must take into account not only the composer's style (which is determined by the national tradition and the influence of the contemporary historical and stylistic era for the composer), not only the stylistics of the work, determined by genre features, and not only the semantics of the musical text, not only the established performing tradition (determined, again, by historical and stylistic factors), but also by the specifics of the technological presentation of vocal material. For example, an "out-of-timbral" instrumental manner of singing would be unacceptable for veristic music, at the same time as an excessive timbral variety of voice sounding would be unacceptable for German Lied. All these details, both technological in nature and performing manner, affect the quality of the interpretative implementation of a vocal work and predict its success with the audience.

Regarding the music of the 20th century, it is especially worth noting its stylistic and performance complexity, due to the generally rather eclectic combinations of musical art of that era.

## Chinese vocal music traditions

We pay special attention to the particular style of Chinese vocal music, which, in turn, affects the performance of academic vocal repertoire by Chinese singers, both in terms of sound quality and performance style. Zhao Dongmei (2016) study presents the specifics of the artistic thinking of a Chinese

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singer, determined by national traditions that are derived from Confucianism as the main ideological position and are aimed at contemplation and self-sufficiency in the system of one's own growth and

preservation of one's own independent inner personality. In assessing the interpretative concept of a vocal work by a European composer performed by Chinese singers, it is necessary to take into account the specifics of the national mentality of the Chinese vocalist, determined by the features, in particular, of Chinese folk music, with which they are exposed since childhood (Xinya, 2024, p. 50).

Let us present the reflections of Chinese researchers on Chinese folk music as a system of thinking focused on linearity of presentation. It is clarified that such thinking is partly based on Western European musical thought, on the melodious presentation of melodic material, and on the other hand tends to timbral sound imagery, sound effects that imitate the sounds of nature (Jiang Wen, 2008, p. 10). As Yu Xinya (2024, p. 51) notes in his study, the orientation towards the preservation of traditions, which embodies a deep understanding of the great value of the national cultural heritage, is an integral part of the Chinese mentality and a characteristic feature of Chinese ethics and aesthetics. As Li Ming (2019) notes, Chinese art over the centuries of its existence has formed a whole system of original traditions, thanks to which it fundamentally differs from others, and it can be said that no other art has created such strict, clear, original and strong traditions as the Chinese. It is important that the national vocal tradition of China, which is collectively represented in the Peking Opera, demonstrates a tendency towards syncretism - the organic interaction of different types of art - singing, speech, playing traditional musical instruments, choreography, acting, pantomime, acrobatic and circus arts, elements of kung fu, fencing, etc. (Xinya, 2024).

The Chinese, thanks to their national mentality, are open to understanding singing as a mechanism for combining conscious (human) and unconscious (superhuman) components of the Universe. In other words, from the point of view of the European approach, they are ready for the semantic diversity of music and its interpretation not only through the personal aspect, but also through the understanding of themselves as a part of the Universe, and this echoes the ancient guidelines of church singing, from which the style of beautiful singing – *bel canto* – “came out”, so to speak, into the wider society. Thus, we note that the Chinese vocalist is subconsciously ready to understand and reproduce the diversity of the European palette of interpretations of academic vocal music.

As for the singing style of the Chinese, for them in the performance of the European academic vocal repertoire, the main difficulty is the timbral correspondence of the Chinese sound model to the European one. We note that the specificity of vocal sound formation among the Chinese, its archetypal basis, is determined by the special sound properties of the Chinese language (Huang, 2012). Without delving into the technology of national Chinese singing and without analyzing its differences from the European academic manner, we note only that in order to create a convincing interpretation of a vocal work, a Chinese vocalist must not only comprehend and master the historical and stylistic components of the vocal material, but also overcome the differences in the technologies of vocal sound formation between the Chinese folk manner and the European academic manner of singing, which are determined by the traditional features of languages and performing traditions. We also note that the acting of actors in the Chinese theater is far from everyday plausibility; it is built on canonized conventional means of expression, stylized movements, and gestures. And the modern European performing style, to a greater or lesser extent, is still based on the canons of the “theater of realism”.

In order to generalize the historical, phonetic, and technological characteristics of the leading national vocal traditions discussed above, a comparative summary of their key stylistic and interpretative features is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1- Comparative characteristics of national vocal schools and their stylistic features**

<i>Vocal school</i>	<i>Historical period of formation</i>	<i>Phonetic and linguistic basis</i>	<i>Main vocal-technical characteristics</i>	<i>Expressive and stylistic priorities</i>	<i>Interpretative implications</i>
Italian	17th-18th centuries	Open vowel system, smooth articulation, prevalence of vocalic sounds	Lowered larynx position; chest-diaphragmatic breathing; rounded and covered tone; high resonance; emphasis on vocal virtuosity	Melodic flexibility, timbral beauty, legato continuity	Requires technical precision, smooth phrasing, and emphasis on vocal brilliance and timbral balance
French	18th–19th centuries	Nasalized vowels, specific consonant articulation, theatrical declamation traditions	Use of both hard and soft sound attacks; register differentiation; mixed register formation; deep abdominal breathing	Clear diction, expressive declamation, emotional timbre formation	Interpretation focuses on word articulation, emotional nuance, and dramatic sensitivity
German	19 <sup>th</sup> century	Consonant-rich phonetic structure; emphasis on resonance cavities	Focus on “instrumental” sound quality; nasal and frontal resonance; dark vowel production; diaphragmatic breathing	Structural clarity, controlled dynamics, instrumental-like sound projection	Requires careful tonal balance, precision in articulation, and structural consistency of phrasing
East Slavic	19 <sup>th</sup> century (formation)	Combination of Church	Integration of European techniques;	Emotional sincerity, narrative	Interpretation combines technical

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	under European influence)	Slavonic, folk, and literary language traditions	emphasis on natural vocal production; synthesis of vocal and dramatic expressiveness	expressiveness, melodic clarity	discipline with emotional expressiveness and semantic clarity
Chinese	Ancient traditions with modern academic synthesis	Tonal language system; strong connection to folk vocal traditions	Integration of traditional vocal habits with European academic techniques; flexible timbre formation	Syncretism of music, movement, and expressive gesture; symbolic expression	Requires adaptation of national vocal habits to European academic stylistic and timbral standards

Source: developed by the authors

The comparative data presented in Table 1 demonstrate that national vocal schools, while sharing a common European academic foundation, reveal distinct stylistic and technological priorities determined by linguistic, historical, and cultural factors. The Italian vocal school emerges as the foundational model for European academic singing, characterized by its emphasis on melodic continuity, vocal virtuosity, and timbral balance. In contrast, the French school highlights the importance of verbal articulation and emotional nuance, reflecting the strong connection between vocal practice and theatrical traditions.

The German vocal school, as illustrated in the table, demonstrates a tendency toward structural precision and instrumental sound formation, shaped by the phonetic and musical traditions of the German-speaking cultural environment. The East Slavic school appears as a synthetic phenomenon that integrates the achievements of Western European traditions while preserving expressive sincerity and dramatic clarity rooted in national cultural heritage. The Chinese vocal tradition, in turn, reflects a unique intercultural synthesis, combining ancient national performing principles with modern European academic vocal techniques.

Overall, the comparison confirms that interpretative implementation of vocal works depends not only on technical mastery but also on the performer's ability to recognize historically and stylistically conditioned differences among national traditions. Such awareness enables the formation of stylistically adequate performance strategies and contributes to achieving artistic authenticity in vocal interpretation.

## Conclusion

Summing up the above, we note that the national-historical nature of music and certain musical genres is both stable and unstable at the same time. The national musical language in the historical context has its own canons. But often, thanks to the performance aspect, it demonstrates dynamic development, is enriched, developed, deformed, acquires or loses certain features. Thus, the interpretation of musical works acts as an indicator of the cultural and semantic tradition of the era. There is expanding of the concept of national style to the concept of an artistic picture of the world, which allows separating two groups of factors that determine national originality in art. The external

factor is the relative psychological stability of the community in a certain historical period, and the internal factor is national mental attitudes, which are the basis of the associative-figurative setting in

creativity (and the creativity of the author and performer, as well as the peculiarities of audience perception). All these factors are defined as style-forming regularities that are capable of influencing the stylistic characteristics of vocal performance in its interpretative manifestations.

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