

Cantonese Opera Singing —— a Sideline to my Career

粵曲演唱——我的副業

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To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 20th anniversary of the Handover of Macau, I would like to tell my story about my engagement in Cantonese Opera singing as a sideline to my career as an English teacher. This is significant, though unthinkable, to young aspirants with a similar interest.

In fact, it was by sheer coincidence that I was introduced into the Cantonese Opera circle by an ex-colleague in 1996. The song “Pan An” (潘安), tailor-made for me, made my day. “Pan An” soon became my icon and I acquired this role from TDM to perform on TV.

Actually I started learning Cantonese Opera songs only by listening to and singing along with the tapes played on a double-cassette recorder and later, the walkman. Additionally, the frequent practices and rehearsals with the

為了慶祝中華人民共和國成立70週年和澳門回歸祖國20週年，我想講述一下我在從事英語教學工作的同時，以粵曲演唱為副業的故事。這對志趣相投的年輕追求者來說，雖然有點匪夷所思，却有著非凡的意義。

事實上，在1996年，我在機緣巧合下獲一位舊同事介紹到粵曲圈子。作品曲目——《潘安》簡直是為我度身訂造，令我興奮不已。“俏潘安”很快成為了我的個人標誌，我從澳廣視獲得了這個角色，得以在電視節目上演出。

其實，我只是通過雙卡錄音機邊聽邊



accompaniment of a band of professional musicians in various clubs I joined enhanced my singing techniques; hence the infallible truth - “Practice makes perfect”.

Thanks to the training I received in St. Pius X Musical Academy too, enabling me to grasp the gist of manipulating my voice and rhythm to coincide with those of the character in a song for tangible showmanship, I strode along by leaps and bounds.

Thence, I was invited twice to be a guest performer at the Macau Art Festival, first in the year of the New Millennium and then in 2004, the same year in which I responded to the appeal of a friend to support her mentor, a prestigious musician, to celebrate his 45th anniversary in his field with a concert tour in Macau, Hong Kong and Guangzhou, and that was the first time I had performed on stage at the Cultural Centre of Macau.

唱的方式開始學習粵劇歌曲，後來就用了隨身聽播放的磁帶。此外，在我參加的各個社團的專業樂隊的伴奏之下，經常進行的練習和彩排，提高了我的演唱技巧，證實了“熟能生巧”這絕對的真理。

由於在聖庇護十世音樂學院接受過訓練，使我能夠掌握自己的嗓音和節奏的重點，並在這方面與曲目中的角色配合，作出具形象化的表演，我的技巧得以大步邁進。

我分別於2000年及2004年兩次獲邀請在澳門藝術節擔任表演嘉賓，也在2004年，應一位朋友的請求，配合她的



As guest performer with Mr. Chan Vai Chun for the inauguration of the Chinese Opera Festival in 2012

與陳渭泉先生在2012年城市粵劇曲藝匯演擔任表演嘉賓

The second phase of my singing as a side-line was the shift from my role of a frail scholar to that of a more masculine figure. I was enlightened by a columnist of the Macao Daily Newspaper, also the former manager of Cinema Alegria, who approached me after watching my performance, inquiring about why I associated my profession with Cantonese Opera, for it sounded weird to him that an English teacher would have done so. Henceforth, some masters of ceremonies who had read his article about me also addressed me in front of the audience as an English teacher forsaking Western hit songs for Cantonese Opera songs. Before long, the columnist contacted me with a request for me to do a male duet with him. That was the first tenacious challenge I had been confronted with. Nevertheless, our successful rendition of the song called “Bidding Farewell to King Orr” (易水送荆軻) led to our collaboration in another song, “Goro saved his younger brother, the

導師——一位著名的音樂家，參與慶祝他的演藝生涯45週年的巡迴演唱會，途經澳門、香港和廣州，這也是我第一次在澳門文化中心的舞臺上表演。我的粵曲副業生涯的第二階段，是從一個潺弱書生到一個較陽剛氣色的角色轉變。我受到《澳門日報》一位專欄作家的啟發，他曾是永樂戲院的經理，在看了我的表演後，他接觸我，問我為什麼在我的職業生涯外與粵曲扯上關係，因為在他聽來，英語老師唱粵曲十分離奇。此後，一些讀過他那篇關於我的報道文章的司儀，在觀眾面前介紹我時也會提到，我是一名英文教師，放棄了西方流行歌曲，改唱粵曲。不久，這位專欄作家聯絡我，邀請我和他一起唱男聲二重唱。這是我遇到的第一個很大的挑戰。然而，我們成功地演繹了這首名叫《易水



My performance to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of my side-line career

慶祝我的副業生涯20週年表演



As “Pan An”, my “icon”, at an early stage
“潘安”是我早期的標誌

Yang saga”(五郎救弟), in the wake of which we were invited to be the honourable guest performers for the inauguration of the Cantonese Opera Show in 2012. Since then I have adopted a brand new genre of singing.

Year after year, with a large repertoire of songs learnt, I took to practising in Zhuhai, where I got acquainted with a renowned director of Chinese Opera and a master of percussion. The song called “Hai Rui challenging the Prime Minister Yan Song” (打嚴嵩), which won for me high encomiums, had also been his recommendation, as he had discovered my voice to be most appropriate for the role of the fearless low-ranked official Hai Rui while he acted as Yan Song.

It is gratifying to have one’s efforts rewarded by enthusiastic applause and compliments from the audience. However, I must emphasize that there is no easy path to success. With over twenty years of experience in this scope, I con-

送荆軻》的曲目，促成了我們在另一首曲目——《五郎救弟》上的合作。之後，我們作為特邀表演嘉賓參加了2012年粵劇曲藝匯演的開幕式演出。從那時起，我開始採用全新的歌唱風格。

年復一年，我學會了很多曲目，開始在珠海練習，結識了一位著名的粵劇導演兼掌板師傅。為我贏得很高讚譽的曲目《打嚴嵩》，這也是他所推薦的，因為他發現我的嗓音最為適合表演職級不高、卻又無所畏懼的官員海瑞這個角色，而他則演嚴嵩。

一個人的努力得到觀眾的熱烈掌聲和讚賞是令人欣慰的。然而，我必須強調，成功沒有捷徑。我在這方面有二十多年的



A memorable photo with the chief management committee members of The Macao General Association of the Cantonese Opera

與澳門粵劇曲藝總會理事會領導留影

sider being too hidebound in one's individual style of presentation a hindrance to one's progress. This is particularly true when it comes to choosing to learn a song by using a karaoke machine, which restricts one's singing to the style of the singer and the tempo on the disc. Such conviction has made me discard the stereotype of singing as I decline to be a copycat, knowing very well that voices vary from one another, and there are always weaknesses to vanquish. Therefore, I stick firmly to the principle that I will only select any song that suits me.

Apart from describing how I laboured up the ladder to success, I would like to share my understanding about the evolution of Cantonese Opera in Macau. In recent years, many singers have chosen to act instead of exerting effort in singing alone since the Secretariat for Social Affairs and Culture tends to approve of any show that comprises at least four Cantonese Opera excerpts, though, according to my unbiased observation, most of them are ineligible performers, whose inept movements obviously betray them. In fact, learning Cantonese Opera acting



a male duet with my mentor
導師與我合唱演出



After our Charity Show in 2017, shown on the Macao Daily Newspaper

2017年刊登於《澳門日報》的慈善表演後照片

經驗，我認為過於守舊的個人化的演出風格會成為個人進步的障礙。當你選擇用卡拉OK機來學習一首歌時，這一點尤其真實，卡拉OK機桎梏了表演者的演唱風格，曲風節奏也大為受限。這樣的信念令我拋棄了唱歌的刻板模式，因為我拒絕作一個模仿者，我很清楚知道每個人的聲音各有所異，總有弱點需要克服。因此，我堅持原則，我只會選擇適合我的歌曲。

除了描述我是如何一步一步為成功而努力以外，我還想分享一下我對粵曲在澳門發展的了解。近年來，許多歌手選擇演戲，而不是單純在唱功上努力磨練，因為社會文化司現傾向於批准任何包括至少四個粵劇折子戲的演出。不過，據我客觀的觀察，大部分的表演者的造詣不佳，



Mr. Zheng Wei Guo as “Yansong” and I, as “Hai Rui”

鄭衛國飾“嚴嵩”而我飾“海瑞”

and singing should start simultaneously at an early age. The impending measure is to balance both without leaning over one feature of the art. After all, listening to Cantonese Opera singing and watching the act are of two different levels. To preserve and perpetuate this intangible cultural heritage, I agree to the saying “One minute of a successful performance is indubitably the fruit of ten years’ harsh training”.

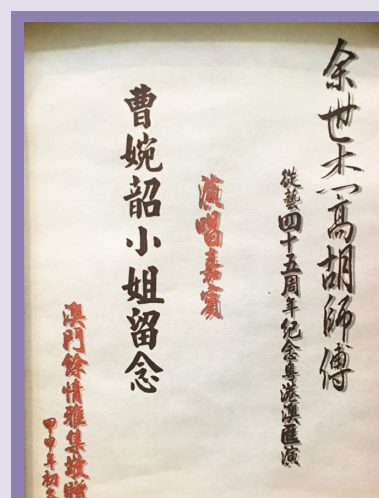
Since the performance to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the sideline to my career in 2016 and the Charity Show to raise funds for the needy in 2017, I have been performing merely with meaningful objectives.

To put it in a nutshell, I must salute those brilliant and self-effacing mentors who have given me credit for my stamina in my pursuit of my sideline. Without being nurtured by their initial process of photosynthesis, I could not have germinated and grown to a plant that blooms luxuriantly. Their indomitable spirit has

其不專業的步法做手令他們無所遁形。事實上，學習粵劇，動作和唱功應在年輕時同步進行。迫切要做的措施是平衡兩者，而不是向藝術的某項特質上傾斜。畢竟，聽粵曲唱功和看粵劇演出是兩個不同的層次。為了保護和延續這一個非物質文化遺產，我同意“台上一分鐘，台下十年功”的說法。

自2016年慶祝副業開展20週年的演出，和2017年慈善籌款演出以來，我的表演一直都是限於有目標、有意義的。

簡而言之，我必須向那些才華橫溢而謙遜的導師們致敬，他們在我追求副業的過程中為我的毅力給予表揚。沒有他們最



Awarded in memory of the tour concert to celebrate the 45th Anniversary of the mentor, Mr. Yu shi jie, in his field of music
慶祝余世杰先生曲藝表演45週年的巡迴演唱會獲頒的紀念狀



Cultural Exchange in Mainland China in celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Handover of Macau

慶祝澳門回歸祖國10週年到內地進行文化交流

inspired me to use progressive and integrated methods of teaching in assisting my students with their active learning. Petty problems may arise in my attempt to learn a complex song. Likewise, some students may also be hampered by pebbles in the course of learning. Nevertheless, we can all surmount those hurdles with resilience. In short, I am grateful that my two careers, teaching and singing, have seasoned my life with bitter and sweet ingredients, best exemplified by the song, “Bridge Over Troubled Water”!

初如光合作用般潤物無聲的滋養，我不可能發芽、成才。他們不屈不撓的精神激勵我採用漸進而貫通的教學方法來幫助我的學生積極學習。在我學習一首複雜歌曲的過程中，可能會出現一些小問題。同樣，一些學生在學習過程中也可能會遇到小阻礙。然而，我們都可以通過堅毅和恆心去克服這些障礙。儘管如此，我為教學和唱曲兩項職業而感恩。正如“Bridge Over Troubled Water”這首歌中唱到的一樣，為我帶來或苦或甜的經歷，豐富了我的人生！



An affair to remember, as a supporting performer for the Show of the prestigious Cantonese Opera Artist, Hon-Wai Leung 梁漢威, the one holding his souvenir.

參加粵劇名伶梁漢威先生(持紀念品者)演唱會演出