Jingju music: concepts and computational tools for its analysis

Tutorial part 2
Introduction to jingju music

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  - Aesthetic principles

- Jinju music core principles
  - Shengqiang
  - Banshi
  - Role-type

- Other jingju music elements
  - Influence of linguistic tones
  - Performance schools
  - Percussion patterns
  - Instrumental accompaniment

- Some notes about jingju nowadays

Fig 1. 《霸王别姬》  Farewell my concubine
What is 京剧 jingju?

- It is a compound art form, that encompasses literature, acting (including acrobatics) and music.
- 京剧 jingju is one of the nearly 300 genres of a wider category called 戏曲 xiqu.
- The “actor” is in the center of the creative process.
Few notes about history of xiqu

- *Xiqu* evolved from **folk forms** of story-telling and farce
- These performances did not use newly composed music, but **local tunes** to which they adapted new lyrics
- It acquired its actual form in the 元 Yuan dynasty (1271-1368)
- From then, it evolved and diversified into more than 300 different genres
- These genres mainly differ in **music** and **dialect**
Few notes about history of jingju

- Jingju is the *xiqu* genre that took form in Beijing during the 19th C.
- Its origins consist of a Southern genre that became successful in the capital.
- In Beijing, it integrated elements from other genres, becoming a complex, compound one.
- At the beginning of the 20th C., it acquired national recognition.
- Included in the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* by UNESCO (2010)

Fig 4. 德和园戏台 Jingju Theatre
Summer Palace, Beijing
Aesthetic principles

- Every element is at the service of delivering the **plot** and the creation of the **character**
- The main aesthetic principle is the so-called 写意 xieyi, **“essentialism”**, as opposed to realism
- This essentialism is expressed through 虚拟表演 xuni biaoyan, **“virtual acting”**
- “Virtual acting” is structured through sets of 程式 chengshi, **“CONVENTIONALISMS”**, defined by Li Ruru (2010) as “the soul of Beijing opera”

Fig 5. 《鱼石图》 Fish and stone
八大山人, Bada Shanren (1626 – 1705)
Jingju music features

- The aural dimension of jingju consists of
  - Singing
  - Instrumental music
  - Artistic declamation

- A clear sense of rhythmicity characterizes the overall performance of jingju

- It is the 唱段 changduan, the ARIAS, where jingju music is fully expressed

- Traditionally, arias were “arranged” (编曲 bianqu) by the actors

Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, ed. (1985) Jingju daguan 京剧大观 (Panorama de jingju), Beijing: Beijing chubanshe; p. 73
How was jingju music created?

- **Lyrics**: sets the basic emotion and structure
- **Shengqiang**: determines the melodic features
- **Banshi**: establishes the rhythmic features
- **Role type**: defines timbre, register, range and style.
- **Specific features**:
  - Tonal categories
  - Dramatic context
  - Personal style of the actor

【西皮流水】
我心中只把爹娘恨，

【西皮流水】

【西皮原板】

First degree

王蓉蓉
Wang Rongrong
Shengqiang stemmed from the local tunes to which the lyrics of new plays were set to.

They evolved to become the set of **melodic features** that define an aria.

A shengqiang implies:
- a modal structure,
- intervalic preferences,
- melodic trends,
- general indications for the instruments,
- some metric characteristics,
- a related **general emotion**

Jingju uses different *shengqiang*, among which the most important ones are 西皮 *xipi* and 二黄 *erhuang*.

They are based in a predominantly (anhemitonic) **pentatonic scale**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shengqiang</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xipi</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erhuang</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan’erhuang</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanbangzi</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sipingdiao</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Distribution of the arias in our corpus according to shengqiang.*

“姜子牙无事隐钓溪”
《鱼肠剑》（伍员）
“Jiang Ziya used to fish in a spring”
from Sword hidden in a fish (Wu Yuan)

Shengqiang: xipi
Banshi: yuanban
Role type: laosheng

“为国家哪何曾半日闲空”
《洪羊洞》（杨延昭）
“I dedicated my whole life to my country”
from Hongyang Cave (Yang Yanzhao)

Shengqiang: erhuang
Banshi: yuanban
Role-type: laosheng
声腔 *shengqiang*

- *Shengqiang* have been traditionally explained as melodic frameworks, structured according to the lyrics, and characterized by their cadential notes.

声腔 shengqiang


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【西皮流水】

【西皮原板】

---

王蓉蓉
Wang Rongrong

First degree
板式 *banshi*

- *Banshi* are labelled **metrical patterns** according to which specific sections of an aria are created

- A single *banshi* implies
  - a meter
  - a tempo range
  - a degree of melodic density
  - specific instrumental sections
  - a **specific expressive function**

- *Banshi* are the main expressive feature of jingju
  - The musical structure of jingju is defined by Chinese musicology as **板腔变化体 banqiang bianhuati**, “system of metrical patterns transformations”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banshi</th>
<th>Metr.</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Expressive function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>慢板 manban</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Calm, introspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>快三眼 kuaisanyan</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Moderately slow</td>
<td>Quite narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>原板 yuanban</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Narrative, conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>二六 erliu</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Moderately fast</td>
<td>Expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>流水 liushui</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>Fast</td>
<td>Agitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>快板 kuaiban</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>Very fast</td>
<td>Strong emotions (rage, fear)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>导板 daoban</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Only the opening line of the first couplet; sudden strong emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>散板 sanban</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Description of emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>摇板 yaoban</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Moderately fast</td>
<td>Free vocal melody, metric accompaniment; inner excitement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“昔日有个三大贤”——《珠帘寨》（李克用）
“In ancient times there were Three Great Sages”, from *The Zhulian Stockade* (Li Keyong)

1. 昔日有个三大贤，
   刘关张结义在桃园。
   ——Introduction

2. 弟兄们徐州曾失散，
   古城相逢又团圆。
   ——Story of the three brothers

3. 关二爷马上呼三弟，
   张翼德在城楼怒发冲冠。
   ——Enemy is approaching

4. 耳边厢又听人呐喊，
   老蔡阳的人马来到了古城边。
   ——Battle between the enemy and one of the brothers

5. 城楼上助你三通鼓，
   十面旌旗壮壮威严。

6. 哗啦啦打罢了头通鼓，
   关二爷提刀跨雕鞍。

7. 哗啦啦打罢了二通鼓，
   人有精神马又欢。

8. 哗啦啦打罢了三通鼓，
   蔡阳的人头落在马前。

9. 一来是老儿命该丧，
   二来弟兄得团圆。

10. 贤弟休回长安转，
    就在这沙陀过几年，
    落得个清闲。
    ——Final line

【导板】Daoban: free meter
【原板】Yuanban: 2/4, moderate
【二六】Erliu: 1/4, moderately fast
【流水】Liushui: 1/4, fast
【散板】Sanban: free metre
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First degree

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行当 role-types

- A role-type is a predefined performance category which actors specialize in.
- Each role type is dedicated to convey one type of character. This type defines his or her gender, age range, social status and psychological profile.
- Each role type determines the set of conventionalisms that the actor has to master, regarding these abilities:
  - 唱 chang: singing
  - 念 nian: declamation
  - 做 zuo: acting (body movement)
  - 打 da: acrobatics (including martial arts)
- Regarding singing, role-types are classified into 生腔 shengqiang, male style, and 旦腔 danqiang, female style.
行当 role-types

- Jingju four main role-types
  - 生 sheng
  - 旦 dan
  - 净 jing
  - 丑 chou

- Sub-classification (according to singing features)
  - 老生 laosheng
  - 小生 xiaosheng
  - 旦 dan
  - 老旦 laodan
  - 净 jing

- Singing styles

Fig 6. Jingju role-types
Regarding singing, each role-type is defined by:
- a distinctive timbre, implying a specific technique
- register (related to the first degree) and range
- specific articulation, having the syllable as basic unit, concerning
  - dynamics
  - ornaments
  - vibrato
- overall rhythmic features and dynamics

Male style of singing is considered the basic one; the female style differs from it in the following aspects:
- uses falsetto,
- register is about a fifth higher
- employs a slower tempo
行当 role-types

老生 laosheng
净 jing
老旦 laodan
旦 dan
小生 xiaosheng
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**Specific features:**

- Tonal categories
- Dramatic context
- Personal style of the actor
Linguistic tones

- Linguistic tones should be expressed in the singing to ease intelligibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beijing dialect</th>
<th>Huguang dialect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>妈 ma1</td>
<td>&quot;mum&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>麻 ma2</td>
<td>&quot;hemp&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>马 ma3</td>
<td>&quot;horse&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;to scold&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>骂 ma4</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;to scold&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吗 ma0</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Jingju uses an artistic language that combines linguistic features from two different dialects

- To date, there is no consensus about how these two dialects are used in terms of tones
流派 *schools*

- Along jingju history, outstanding actors created individual performing schools

![Fig 7. 京剧四大名旦, the four great jingju actors of *dan*](image)

- Actors who follow these schools aim to deliver a performance as close as possible to that of the school founder.
The instrumental ensemble

文场 wenchang, “civil section”

武场 wuchang, “martial section”
锣鼓经 percussion patterns

- Percussion ensemble is in charge of signaling the rhythmicity that articulates the whole performance
- The main resource to this aim is a repertoire of predefined, labelled percussion patterns
- The function of these patterns are:
  - accompanying and conducting actor’s stage movements,
  - setting the emotional atmosphere,
  - signaling structural points from the play to the aria levels,
  - introducing arias and their sections
- Percussion patterns are learned by memorizing a string of syllables that represent phonetically the sounds of each element of the pattern, and are uttered according its rhythmic structure
锣鼓经 percussion patterns

【夺头】Duotou

龙 冬 大 大 大 台 仓 大 台 仓 仓 大 扑 台 仓
long dong da da da tai cang tai cai yi tai cang da pu tai cang

danpigu (drum)

xiaoluo (small gong)

naobo (cymbals)

daluo (big gong)
锣鼓经 percussion patterns

【扭丝】 Niusi

long dong ba da tai cang tai cai tai cang tai qi tai yi tai cang tai cai cang tai cai tai cang
danpigu (drum)
xiaolu (small gong)
naobo (cymbals)
daluo (big gong)
Instrumental accompaniment

- “Civil section” of the instrumental ensemble accompanies the singing in a **heterophonic** texture

简谱 *jianpu*, simplified notation

*Jingju qupu jicheng: di er ji* 京剧曲谱集成·第二集 (Collection of jingju scores: 2nd Vol.), Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, Shanghai, 1998, p. 207
Situation of *jingju* nowadays

- With the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, jingju actors were trained in specialized schools.
- These schools adopted the Western methodology for music training.
- New figures appeared: the jingju music composer and the stage director.
- Three different types of plays form the contemporary repertoire of jingju:
  - 传统戏 *chuantong xi*: traditional plays
  - 新编历史剧 *xinbian lishi ju*: new historical plays
  - 现代戏 *xiandai xi*: modern plays

Fig 8. *The Legend of the Red Lantern* (1965)
Introduction to jingju music

**Compound** art form based on **conventionalisms**

Jingju music is fully expressed in **arias**

- **Shengqiang**: determines the melodic features
- **Banshi**: establishes the rhythmic features
- **Role type**: defines timbre, register, range and style.

Other important elements of jingju music

- Linguistic tones
- Percussion patterns
- Heterophonic accompaniment
References

Beijing shi yishu yanjiusuo (Beijing Centre for Art Research) and Shanghai yishu yanjiusuo (Shanghai Centre for Art Research), eds. (1999) Zhongguo jingju shi (History of Chinese jingju). Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe.


Credits

Figs 1, 2, 6: photos taken by Rafael Caro Repetto

Fig 3: "Yuan qu". Licensed under Public domain via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yuan_qu.jpg#mediaviewer/File:Yuan_qu.jpg

Fig 4: "SummerPalaceOperaStageAdj", original uploader: Leonard G. at en.wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia to Commons by user RepliCarter using CommonsHelper. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SummerPalaceOperaStageAdj.jpg#mediaviewer/File:SummerPalaceOperaStageAdj.jpg

Fig 5: 潮河边人博客 - http://jsl641124.blog.163.com/blog/static/177025143201182892815568/


Vid 1: 京剧《白蛇传》游湖 张火丁 宋小川 李艳艳 1 / 11 [excerpt], uploaded by user shegiang. Standard YouTube Licence - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZCMGu7wbHM

Vid 2: 全本《四郎探母》主演：于魁智 李胜素 李海燕 4 / 7 [excerpt], uploaded by user shegiang. Standard YouTube Licence - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtfWR7ec5_c

Vid 3: Audio from 耿其昌 Geng Qichang (1997) “珠帘寨【西皮导板、原板、流水】”, from 《耿其昌京剧唱段选》 (Selected arias by Geng Qichang), Shanghai shengxiang

Vid 4: 20140131 空中剧院 京剧《凤还巢》 2/2 [excerpt], uploaded by user iCNTV戏曲官方频道 | iCNY Traditional Opera Official Channel. Standard YouTube Licence - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQDDoGsqxM

Vid 5: 京剧《霸王别姬》史依弘 尚长荣 1 / 3 [excerpt], uploaded by user shegiang. Standard YouTube Licence - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rM2PhPkzqo

Vid 6: 经典电影现代京剧《红灯记》 [excerpt], uploaded by user shegiang. Standard YouTube Licence - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inXV8snbUQo

Aud 1: 王蓉蓉 Wang Rongrong, “《女起解》： 我心中只把爹娘恨” [excerpt], from 《王蓉蓉经典唱腔全集（一）》 (Collection of classical arias by Wang Rongrong, Vol. 1), Beijing wenhua yishu yinxiang chubanshe

Aud 2: 黄炳强 Huang Bingqiang, “姜子牙无事隐钓溪” [excerpt], from 《京剧之星：黄炳强专辑》 (Stars of jingju: Huang Bingqiang), Zhongguo changpian zonggongsi

Aud 3: 黄炳强 Huang Bingqiang, “为国家哪曾半日闲空” [excerpt] from 《京剧之星：黄炳强专辑》 (Stars of jingju: Huang Bingqiang), Zhongguo changpian zonggongsi
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