

Cardiac Qi Is Interlinked, Beautiful Sound Is Mellow And Full

—My opinion on *Of Sound* written by Tang Shunzhi¹ in Ming dynasty

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---- MON AVIS APRES AVOIR LU SUR LA VOIX DE TANGSHUNZHI DE LA DYNASTIE
DES MING

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Abstract: *Of Sound* written by Tang Shunzhi aims to describe the human sound from the surface of this article, while the whole article lists lots of various kinds of sound phenomenon of human beings in daily life. It also analyses human sound and states the relationship between the sound of human beings and the motion or gaseous state, the adjustment of the state of mind and the state of the movement of producing the sound by some physiological organs respectively in the process of illustration of human sound. To be exact, the article covers the content both on “discussing the sound” and on physiognomy. If we delete the contents on the superstitious augury in commenting the appearance according to the sound, and completely read the article from the angle of view of the artistic singing, *of sound* could help us know some basic opinions of the ancient scholars on human sound and provide the consultable written materials for our study on the skills of producing the sound of the art of singing of the ancient people and the theory of the ancient art of singing.

Key words: Art of singing, trends of respiration, state of producing sound, adjustment of mind, spirit and temperament

¹ Tang Shunzhi (1507—1560), scholar in Ming Dynasty. He styled himself Tang Yingde while the others named him scholar of Jing Chuan. He was born in Wu Jin (Jiangsu Province). He got the first place in metropolitan exam in the eighth year during the ruling of Jia Qing. In the 12th year, he became the compiler of the Imperial Academy, revising the memoir. Because he refused to submit to Zhang Cong, he had to resign and return home. In the 18th year, the emperor had the old palace built, then Tang Shunzhi obliterated his registered permanent residence and returned to Yang Xian Mountain. During more than ten years of studying, he almost read all the books, and legal list. He was so knowledgeable that he mastered astronomy, mathematics, geology, music, and military science. He almost digested all the subjects. He has written six books as a series called “Liu Bian”, including *Zuo*, *You*, *Wen*, *Wu*, *Ru*, and *Bei*. He rejected to imitate the ancient scholar and admire Tang and Song Dynasty. He was one of “the School of Tang and Song Dynasty”. Others are Wang Shenzhong, Mao Kun and Gui Youguang in Jin Jiang. His famous book is *The Corpus of the Scholar of Jing Chuan*.

The author had introduced the article called *The Prologue of the Corpus of Dong Zhongfeng* in the magazine *The Study of Literature* published in 2000, the sixth in the title of issue in the title of *Interpreting the Sound with the Article, Explaining the Article with the Sound*. The article was included in the *Corpus Written by Scholar of Jing Chuan*, in the volume ten, on page 35, published by Shanghai Ancient Books Press in August 1991.

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Résumé: En apparence, l'article *Sur La Voix* de Tang Shunzhi de la dynastie des Ming discute de la voix humaine. En effet, il s'agit de la divination et la physiognomonie. Mais, cet article cite tant des exemples quotidiens des phénomènes des voix humaines. Il aussi analyse la voix humaine et explique la relation entre la marche de respiration, la regularization de la psychologie et l'action et l'état des organes biologiques des corps humains au cours d'émettre un son. Cet article s'agit de la discussion de la voix et de la physiognomonie. Si nous ignorons le contenu de la divination et la physiognomonie et nous étudions l'article sous l'angle du chant artistique, nous pouvons connaître l'avis des homes de letters des anciens en Chine à la voix humaine par *Sur La Voix*. Il nous fournit du document pour que nous puissions étudier et connaître la technique du chant artistique de la voix humaine des anciens et éduiter leur théorie du chant artistique.

Mots-clés: l'art du chant, l'état dynamique de la respiration, l'état d'émettre un son, la regularization de la psychologie, le temperament d'esprit

We often come across the phenomenon that one work bequeathed by the ancient scholars has many different translations. Some use the simile to express the opinion of the author by dint of another thing; the issues reflected in some others may be the core discussed by the articles in stating a thing directly; and others list the paragraphs separately on one wide subject to illustrate the local issues connected with the subject. In this way, authors not only explain the issue discussed explicitly, but also comment other things, and thus they make the works of the ancient scholars gain the features of having many edges.

Set the *Guanzi, Five Passages* for example. It is an article on the political comment and season, but the whole article discusses from the swing. Therefore, it has the referenced value in studying the ancient science of swing in China.

Another example is *The Yellow Emperor Internal Classic*. It is a summary of various schools of thought and their exponents in pre-Qin Times on the idea of keeping in good health and the practical experience. It has an extremely high prestige in traditional Chinese medicine. Therefore all the successful qualified doctors of later ages advocate this book. But the scholars studying the ancient Chinese prose illustrates the effect of some physiological organs on singing and producing sound from the angle of view of physiology and acoustics in virtue of the objective phenomenon of producing sound and singing. Therefore, it has become the precious reference for the study on the theory of vocal music of our ancient times.

The third example is *the Book of Change*. Generally, it is considered as a book on augury of our ancient times. But, augury can't cover all the contents of it. We can say that it is the basis of our traditional culture. It not only describes how to judge the fortune of people by divinatory symbols, the glossary of the divinatory symbols, making the divinatory symbols, but also widely records the basic state of each social class in our remote ages and relatively comprehensively reflects the basic knowledge of human society and social life in

remote ages. Certainly, it includes the knowledge of the music in remote ages. *Xiang Shang*, there are the relatively important records of the discussion of music.

Of Sound written by Tang Shunzhi in Ming Dynasty has the features stated above. From the surface of this article, it aims to describe the sound of human beings with the content of instructing augury and physiognomy. This article lists a lot of various kinds of sound phenomenon of human beings in daily life. It also analyses human sound and states the relationship between the production of it and the motion of gaseous state, the adjustment of the state of mind and the state of the movement of producing the sound by some physiological organs respectively in the process of illustration to distinguish one's characters and moral conduct. Therefore, the article refers to two issues naturally. First is discussing the sound and second is commenting appearance.

If we delete the content about the traditional divining by drawing lots in a temple, or about practicing physiognomy or judging a person according to the sound, the article can help us know some basic opinions of the scholars in Ming dynasty in China on human sound and provide referenced written material for us to study the skills of producing sound of the art of singing by ancient people and the theory of the art of ancient singing.

It is a pity that the circle of singers does not pay attention to this article. In all the limited treatises about music I have read, I have never met the records that this article was recommended or cited. However, this does not impair the realistic significance and the artistic value in singing of this article. So far, though this article is not recognized as an important monograph of the ancient theory of art of singing, it objectively and authentically illustrates the humanity of human sound from many sides and angles, so it worth reading. Therefore, I would like to introduce this article to everybody. Let's study together.

Following is the whole article:

Of Sound

The human sound is like the ring of the clock or the

drum. If the organ is big the sound will be loud, and vice versa. If the spirit is balanced, Qi will be smooth, and thus the sound will be mellow. If the spirit is confused, Qi will be rapid, and thus the sound will be pressing and light.

Therefore, the sound of the noble man will be produced from the diaphragm. It is interlinked and unified with Qi and is expressed naturally. Diaphragm is the root of the sound, while the tip of the tongue is the surface. If the root is deep, the surface is various or vice versa. Therefore, the sound originates from the root and is shown from the surface.

If the sound is silvery and mellow, firm and sonorous, slow and strong, rapid and smoothly, long and forceful, intrepid and rhymed, it is as loud as the ring of a large bell, as low as the drop of water. If one's complexion is healthy and he has boldness of vision; while speaking with him, he answers after thinking for a while, this is the appearance of a noble man.

The ugly man produces sound with the tip of tongue, pressing and not loud. His sound is pressing, obscure, short, noisy, loud, loose, and broken or the stress is unequal without rhyme. It is as the firewood of precipice sticking out is brutal, the messy phenomenon making men impetuous; or like the sound produced by the broken clock; or like the frustrating ring of a drum; or like goose grumbling to his children; or like the sick ape wooing or the lonely wild goose being left behind; as soft as the earthworm chanting; as strong as the beast making noise at night; like the dog barking; like the sheep sing. This is the female appearance.

If men have female voice, they look like women; if women have male voice, it is impedimental. If a man with a big body has a low voice, the sound is sometimes loud and sometimes low like weaving a net. This kind of voice has both the male and female features. If a person produces a sound which is slow at first, and then pressing or the opposite; or Qi disappears while there is still sound; or the color of the face changes before he speaking, he has a female appearance. Only balancing the spirit in inner Qi and smoothing it with the face we can get along well with other people. Although the word should be spoken in a sequence, the timber should not change. If the spirit is not balanced and Qi is not smooth, man will speak incoherently and the effect of the words will be disturbed.

Men have five virtues with Qi and the sound in the first place. These two virtues are the surface of the five. So the sound of the earth is deep and thick, the sound of the wood loud, the sound of the water mellow and rapid, the sound of the fire raging, the sound of the metal smooth. Some people say that men with a light voice are not capable of judging things, those with noisy voice can not succeed, those with confuse voice can not plot things, those with low voice are rude and illiterate. People with a voice like the water in gully are very noble; those with a bright voice like the sound of an urn have all kinds of blessings. It is said in a poem that the

sound of the wood is loud, the sound of fire not smooth and raging, and the sound of metal mellow, rapid and rhymed.

The noble man produced the sound from the diaphragm with the firm breath, the broad throat, and the strong sound, while the ugly man produced the sound with the lip and the tongue that means that he will be poor all life. His sound is low with it restricted and unclear. The sound of the noble man is mellow. If the sound is too soft, it shows the fear; if the sound is too loud, it shows to be broken. If heard from the other side of the mountain, the sound is full and mellow, and this is the confidence and foresight of the noble man.

The end. (The author adds the punctuation and subsection).

The whole article can be divided into seven paragraphs.

The First Paragraph introduces the three basic factors consisting of the human sound. That is *Organ*, *Qi* and *Spirit*.

1. *Organ*——the human organs producing sound, including Adam's apple and throat. Larynx is the original organ for producing sound. Some articles refer it as the original organ for vibration *the sound is produced from the air flue called larynx by us*³. This is the factor of the origin of sound. At the beginning of the article that *human beings can produce sound. If the organ is big, the sound is loud; if the organ is small, the sound is short*. It indicates explicitly that the human sound originates from *the organ* and the physiological state of the organ for producing sound——larynx, the size of the state for action of producing sound and the cause and effect of the magnificence of the sound.

2. *Qi*——Breath. This is the only dynamic factor of the human beings in producing sound. The article said *if the breath is harmonious, the sound is to be mellow and deep*. It explains the close relationship between the right motion of breathing and the effect of the ideal artistic human sound in the artistic singing.

3. "*Spirit*"——expression and spirit. It is the so-called psychological factor of singing. In the article it is said that *if the spirit is clear, Qi is smooth; if the spirit is confused, the Qi is pressing and short*. It stresses the effect of adjustment of the mind, spirit and temperament, consciousness on the motion of breathing while singing and the conditional relationship with the quality of the human sound based on such effect.

According to this paragraph, we realize that "*Spirit*" "*Qi*" and "*Organ*" exists separately in the human sound of artistic singing, but also mutually interact, aid and restrict. That is to say, the ideal human sound of singing is produced as a whole. Many factors connect with others and can't function without any one.

³ John Caro Berking, *Teaching Sing*, Page53, translated by Xiao Yu Page53

The second paragraph further illustrates the features of the artistic human sound.

1st. *Human Sound comes out of the public region.* Here, it refers to the motive headspring of the sound of singing “breath” coming out of the public region.

2nd. Human sound must be *interlinked with the cardiac Qi* “cardiac” refers to the mind, meaning the imagination of singing. It is proved that good human sound of singing must conform to the sentence that “all the sounds are produced by the mind”⁴. This has been the common character of the literary artistic works. The article takes the view that the artistic human sound *interlinked with the cardiac Qi coming out of the diaphragm is the real root of human sound*, whereas “the tip of tongue is the surface of the sound”, if the root is deep, the surface is heavy; if the root is flat, the surface is light.

3rd. The artistic human sound of singing has a kind of capability. As it is said in the article, *it must be integral in order to transfer far*. The sound stream must be unified with the strength of the diaphragm and the sound of the heart. The timbre must be firm and soft, strong and weak in order to produce the artistic effect that various sounds are *integral* as a whole.

The third paragraph visually and dialectically states some basic features of the idea of the ideal human sound of singing. As stated in the article, *the sound of noble man is clear and mellow, firm and bright, slow and strong, quick and harmonious, long and intense, intrepid and rhymed*; as loud as the striking of the clock, as low as the sound produced by a stream. In fact, this is the standard for practicing the ideal human sound of singing. Setting aims refers to the plasticity that the artistic human sound of singing should have. That is, the high and low sound link up naturally, the strength of the sound changes smoothly and line of sound tightens and relaxes in a suitable degree.

The fourth paragraph introduces the manifestation in the angle of timber of the *sound of the ugly people* in two administrative levels. At first, it directly opens out the personality of this sound, for example, *pressing, hoarse, astringent, noisy and loud. Because of being loud, it disperses. Therefore the light and heavy sound is unequal without any rhyme.*

Then the another used simile to further describe the features of *the sound of an ugly man as the firewood of precipice sticking out is brutal and messy phenomenon makes men impetuous or like the sound produced by the broken clock; or like the frustrating ring of the drum; or like the goose grumbling to his children in cold days or like the wild goose choking with sobs; or like the sick ape while wooing or the lonely wild goose while being left behind; as soft as the earthworm chanting; as strong as the beast making noise at night; like the dog barking;*

like the sheep singing.

Certainly, some assimilations here are so reluctant that it is difficult to understand of all ages, there are only few people ever heard *the sound produced by the goose while grumbling to his children in cold days or by the sick ape while wooing, or by the beast making noise.* These words seem to be a little inappropriate nowadays. So we can only know the general meaning as a reference.

The fifth paragraph gives various kinds of “impedimental” sounds such as “men having the female voice” with the soft and weak timber or “women having the male voice” seem unnatural and ungraceful “Loud voice produced by a large body” or the strength of the sound being *unequal*, and “being slow at first then pressing or the apposite” both belong to the bad sound.

There are three reasons for producing these human sounds as showed in the article:

The power of Qi supporting the sound production has not enough controlling strength. It is said in the article *Qi disappears while there still sound.*

Mental preparation is not enough before producing the sound. It is said in the article that *the color of face changes before speaking.*

The state of mind is not stable and the power of Qi is not harmonious. It is said in the article, “*If the air is not stable and Qi unharmonious, its sound has no sequence and the timber is disturbed*”.

Seemingly the contents of this article commenting the looks according to the sound from the third paragraph are comparatively apparent. But, from the study of the vocality, the article has some content about “discussing the sound”. Both the comprehension and using for reference and the thread of ideas in writing shown by the article can make us recognize the dual nature of the idea of this article, especially that this article has a function of directing a way. Such as “*Qi disappears before the sound stops*”, “*the timbre changes before the mind makes good preparations*”, “*If the air is not stable and Qi unharmonious*”. After reading it, we not only can understand the idea of this article, further move, we can feel the importance of the power of Qi, the adjustment of the mind and the psychosis.

However, the art of singing is developing and the taste of it is various. Now, “men who having female voice” or “women having male voice” is not unadvisable human sound in my opinion. Think about it, there were men disguising themselves as women to sing or the opposite in the history of the development of the art of singing in China or foreign countries. The four great female leading roles in Beijing opera (i.e. Mei Lanfang, Cheng Yanqiu, Xu Huisheng and Shang Xiaoyun) are all men; Cherubino (a character of the article written by W. A. Mozart) is a male character shaped with a Mezzo soprano; the boy in *Il Re Pastore* is manifested with a soprano; after hearing *Paradise*

⁴ Picking from *Musical Book*

sang by Xiao Yaxiang in the amateur group in the Tenth National Youthful Singer Competition held in the March 3rd, 2002 at night on CCTV, I felt that her voice was rather rough, bold and bleak than soft. The sound of singing of Tian Zhen (Chinese female singer) has more unconventional elegant demeanor and their hoarse voice is full of rigor. Appreciating their sound, I don't have *humble or impedimental* feeling. On contrary, we see that the artistic pursuit for one's own sound in dudes various aspects, and this pursuit and knowledge is always changing and promoting. It is such promotion that enriches the art of singing gradually. Therefore, it helps us realize the plasticity in the human sound. There are a lot of such examples we will not state one by one.

The sixth paragraph explains the human sound with the two opposing principles in nature and five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth). It was almost a very common way to explain some existing things even predicating the life by taking the advantage of some material in nature in the ancient times when the cognitive ability was still underdeveloped. The modern academic field thinks it that Yin and Yang, the two opposing principles and the five elements, produced in Yin Dynasty because *Intellectual Life in Chun Qiu Period* and *The Book of Countries*⁵ has the records. But it is *Five Behaviors and Five Item* written by Dong Zhongshu⁶ that relatively explicitly referred to the sound issue with this theory. Although, this theory had a lot of *secret aspects*⁷ from the beginning and showed

some *reluctant place*,⁸ Dong Zhongshu still thought that Qi was the medium in discussing "*the unification correspondence and telepathy of the nature and human beings*".⁹ However, **Of Sound** still uses the basic principle in discussing the human sound by using Yin and Yang, the two opposing principles in nature, and the five elements.¹⁰ He considered that Qi was the *precondition of the sound*. Only the sound supported by Qi could produce *the phenomenon of the five elements of human sound*.

In this paragraph, the content that sizes up the personality of human beings with the sound is more vivid. It is said in the article "*people with light voice are not capable of judging things, those with noisy voice can't succeed; those with confused voice can not carry out the things after plotting; those with low voice are rude and illiterate*", but the description of the ideal human sound by the article is still so tangible. It is said, *people with a voice like the water in gully are very noble; those with a bright voice like the sound of an urn have all kinds of blessings*. The author thought that this kind of sound was the only one that could give the effect that "*speaking like the water in the deep urn, with a mellow sound*".

The seventh paragraph is the end of the article, having the function of conclusion in some degree. Therefore, it stresses that *the noble person produces sound from diaphragm with firm Qi and wide larynx* that consists of the basic factors of human sound. *Clear and melodious* sound is the most advisable. If *the sound is too soft*, it will produce the unstable feeling of the sound that will makes people "*fear*" just as what is said in the article. If the sound is *too strong*, it will become "*broken*" just as what is said in this article. This is what we often say that the real voice is too strong which will influence the connection of the sound in different sound

⁵ 'Therefore, the late Emperor mixed the earth with the metal, wood, water and fire to make kinds of things'.Book of Countries, Book of Zheng

⁶ Dong Zhongshu (179—104BC) , a great ideologist in Han Dynasty. He advocated the theory of Yin and Yang, the two opposing principles and the five elements. He applied the telepathy theory between nature and human beings in the music and used Yin and Yang and the Five Elements to interpret the development of the music. These ideas made a significant effect on the post theories.

⁷ It has said in Five Behaviors and five Items regarding the relationship among the five elements that, "The Emperor is impolite to his servant is as the wood is not straight. There is a lot of strong wind in summer. The wind is the personality of the wood, so the sound of "Jiao" corresponds to the strong wind; the emperor doesn't accept the advice is as the metal doesn't submit to the leather. There is a lot of thunderbolt in autumn. The thunderbolt is the personality of the metal, so the sound of "Shang" corresponds to the thunderbolt; the Emperor doesn't show solicitude to the people is as the fire is burning completely. There is a lot of lightening in autumn. The lightening is the personality of the fire, so the sound of "Zhi"

corresponds to the lightening; the Emperor doesn't listen to people is as the water doesn't flow fluently. There is a lot of rainstorm in spring and summer. The rain is the personality of the water, so the sound of "Yu" corresponds to the rainstorm; the Emperor has not a tolerant mind is as people haven't the harvest. There is a lot of thunder in autumn. The thunder is the personality of the earth, so the sound of "Gong" corresponds to the thunder. In music terms of Chinese language, Gong refers to C in letter name, Shang refers to D, Jiao refers to E, Zhi refers to G, and Yu refers to A.

⁸ Cai Zhongde, *The Aesthetic History of Chinese Music*, page311, People Music Press , Jan. 1995

⁹ The same as the above

¹⁰ In *The Doctrine of Five Elements*, it is said that, "*If the five elements are propitious, the country prosper and the people are at peace, and vice versa*."

districts and give prominence to the phenomenon of changing the sound. The only sound which can be fluent is the soft and strong, the alt not tightening, and the undertone not loose. Nowadays, these theories are still the issue we should pay attention to in practicing the artistic human sound.

On how to comprehend this article, different people have different views. In the different discussions, we can understand the contents the article covers more completely and exactly. Here, I just express a little opinion of my own in general.

This article provides us a lot of referenced content in the basic practice of vocality. For example, the issue of *organ being big* come up with in the first paragraph can be understood as follows: in the process of producing human sound of singing, the organ producing sound—larynx should be big and open. In this way, it can help produce sound to sing, while, the open state of the larynx is the congenital condition in the natural growth physiologically in one aspect, that is, what we called the inherent natural condition. In another aspect, the practice of producing sound has a postnatal request for the trends of in producing sound of the larynx. Its standard should be wide, flexile and strong. Whether innate nature or postnatal practice, *big organ* is the basic condition that the ideal trends in producing sound should have. In this way, we should not only pay attention to the practice of opening the larynx in practicing sound production, but also check carefully to make sure whether their natural physiological state is suitable for the study of their major in selecting the teaching object. It is proved that good natural condition of voice has good physiological state and relatively flexile motion state of the larynx whose stretching ability is good and whose appearance and shape are larger, having good stability. This is the natural law shown by the physical property of the musical instrument of the human sound.

In addition, the whole article sets up the goal of the

artistic human sound of singing from the elements (“*Organ*” “*Qi*” and “*Spirit*”) producing it from the performance manifestation of the artistic human sound and the appearance of the type of sound. This makes us realize that the complete teaching content of music vocal teaching and ideal human sound of sing not only covering the issue of the human sound. Although it only refers to the human sound, the ideal one should be harmonious and unified as a whole in order to achieve the artistic effect. Around the process of the production of the artistic human sound, we should pay enough attention to the pluralistic Factors from different views. Furthermore, singing includes the request for the artistic taste, the comprehension of the philosopher of life and so on. It is proved that the outstanding vocal music teaching has manifestations in these aspects and clearly prompts the successors doing this work, i.e., pay attention to the integrity of the appliance of the technique and the artistic manifestation.

Simile and dialectics are used in many places in this article to illustrate the idea of the author. These two ways are the common ones for people to comprehend and recognize the objective things. Some people say that it is hard to study vocal music because we *can't see or touch it* and many problems about the sound are abstract. It is true that the practice of human sound has more innate factors compared with the practice of other music and performance majors. The related process of the body has the instability. But, if we can use more simile to illustrate the motion of producing sound and sue more dialectics to explain the artistic human sound, can we illustrate the issues existing in the motion of producing sound more dearly and concretely? I think so. In this way, the students will has less confusion and more impression of the objects at least. This is the improvement in vocal music teaching itself and it will help people study the vocal music. Therefore, the basic vocal music teaching should adopt this teaching method in order to make the practice of human sound more concrete, vivid and have more artistic effect.

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