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Challenges and Solutions for Native Mandarin-Chinese Speakers in Singing German Lieder

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Challenges and Solutions for Native Mandarin-Chinese
Speakers

in Singing German Lieder

Fei Xia

A Doctoral Research Project
submitted to the College of Creative Arts at
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in

Voice Performance

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ABSTRACT

Challenges and Solutions for Native Mandarin-Chinese Speakers in Singing German Lieder

Fei Xia

The purpose of this research is to focus on the challenges faced by Mandarin-Chinese speaking singers in singing German Lieder, as well as providing these singers with solutions for overcoming these difficulties. Singing art songs such as French *Mélodies* and German Lieder can greatly improve singers' artistic and aesthetic values because of the beauty of the poetry and the language. However, it is very difficult for native Mandarin-Chinese speakers to sing German Lieder. Some of the primary difficulties faced by Mandarin-Chinese speaking singers are German diction and interpretation of German poetry and texts. Solutions to these challenges of singing German Lieder will be presented. These solutions are based on the analysis of reference material as well as this writer's singing and performing experience. This study is expected to provide native Mandarin-Chinese speakers with a helpful guide to singing German Lieder with confidence.

This paper starts with the introduction of Chinese Pinyin and IPA, as well as the differences between Pinyin and German IPA, followed by the phonetic problems and solutions for native Mandarin-Chinese speakers in singing Lieder. The paper will then discuss challenges in interpreting German poetry and solutions for Mandarin-Chinese singers in interpreting German texts.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Why this Study is Needed

The German *Lied* is often said to have been created on October 19th, 1814, when Franz Schubert composed “Gretchen am Spinnrade.”¹ German *Lied* is a form of German art song which specifically combines music with poetry and tightly connects vocal lines with the piano. This song form is specific to the German language, so to perform it properly, singers must study the IPA for German, as well as the construction and language of German Romantic poetry. For most Mandarin singers who sing *Lieder*, German language and diction are challenging. First, Mandarin and German are in two different language systems. German diphthongs, vowels, consonants, glides, and word stress are all very different from Mandarin, and even the system of learning the two languages is different.² Secondly, because of the differences between Eastern and Western culture, learning German poetic meter, structure, and poetic characters will be hard for Mandarin singers. Deep interpretation of poems from important German poets like Goethe, Schiller, and Müller are also difficult for Mandarin singers. Last, but not least is the interpretation of texts. If Mandarin singers do not have a deep and thorough understanding of German language, diction, poetry, and literature, they will have difficulties understanding the texts and characters of *Lieder*, which will lead to problems in the emotional expression of *Lieders*. Emotional expression is one of the most significant elements of singing

¹ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Wisconsin: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 39.

² Kurt Adler, *Phonetics and Diction in Singing: Italian, French, Spanish, German* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), chap. 8, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttsg5z.7>.

Lieder. Thus, inaccurate, or inappropriate emotional expressions will destroy the entire artistic conception of a *Lied*. This research will address all issues mentioned above, and it is to be hoped that the solution propounded will help those Mandarin speakers attempting to master German *Lieder*.

Scope and Procedure

This paper will include a comparison between Chinese Pinyin and German IPA; a discussion of German phonetics and diction problems for Mandarin singers; an exploration of the difficulties for Mandarin singers that are associated with the interpretation of German poetry, *Lieder* text preparation and interpretation, as well as emotional expression for Mandarin singers; and an analysis of vocal techniques in singing *Lieder*.

The questions this research hopes to answer are as follows:

1. What is the Chinese Pinyin system and what is German IPA? What are the differences between these two languages?
2. How do German phonetics and diction work? What challenges do German phonetics and diction create for Mandarin singers? What approach can be taken to solve these problems?
3. What is the best way to interpret German poetry and German literature that are associated with *Lieder*, such as poetic structure, characters, and symbolism? What difficulties do Mandarin singers face to fully understand German poetry and literature related to *Lieder*? What solutions can be applied?
4. How should Mandarin singers analyze and interpret German texts? What steps can

one take? In addition, in performance, how can Mandarin singers accurately express emotions when singing based on the analysis of related texts? For native Mandarin singers, what approach can be applied to improve emotional expression when singing *Lieder*?

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

This research will be based on the study of available materials on German diction, poetry, and literature. Some references reviewed include books, articles, papers, and dissertations that are available through West Virginia University libraries and its affiliated institutions' databases. Below are summaries of important literature referring to this topic. There are no published materials specifically designed to guide native Mandarin speakers with strategies for producing the sounds, vowels, and consonants required by the German language. This writer's goal is to provide such a guide.

The Oxford University Press published the handbook entitled *A Handbook of Diction for Singers*³ in 2022. In this book, David Adams writes about the International Phonetic Alphabet in German and International Phonetic Alphabet symbols for German. In this third edition, Dr. Adams added a new chapter on phonetic symbols and unique sounds in German, which offers a whole guide to singers and coaches who wish to achieve professional levels of diction.

The New York Oxford University Press published the book entitled *The Singer's Guide to German Diction*⁴ in 2016. This book is an important foundation for a complete course in German diction for singers and vocal coaches. Valentin Lanzrein and Richard Cross explain the diction rules, and provide pronunciation exercises, as

³ David Adams, "An Introduction to Individual Sounds," in *A handbook of Diction for Singers: Italian, German, French, 3rd ed* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴ Valentin Lanzrein and Richard Cross, *The Singer's Guide to German Diction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

well as IPA transcription and examples from the vocal literature. All these are used for the practice of German diction, and feature musical exercises drawn from art song. This book is an invaluable resource for singers' study, especially for Mandarin singers and other who are not native German speakers.

The Quarterly Journal of Chinese Studies in Xiamen University in China published an article entitled “*Phonology of Mandarin Chinese: A Comparison of Pinyin and IPA*”⁵ in 2015. In this article, Sunny Ifeanyi Odinye compares Pinyin symbols and IPA in describing Mandarin consonant and vowel sounds. The writer also discusses the advantages and disadvantages of Pinyin and IPA.

The University of Rochester Press published a book entitled *Of Poetry and Song: Approaches to the Nineteenth-century Lied*⁶ in 2010. In this book, Ann Clark Fehn, Rufus E Hallmark, and Harry E Seeling study the relationships between text and music in the German *Lied*. They also analyze poems that were written by Goethe, Heine, and Eichendorff.

The Oxford University Press published the book entitled *Poetry into Song: Performance and Analysis of Lieder*⁷ in 1996. In this book, Deborah J Stein and Robert Spillman analyze the language of German poetry and German Romanticism, featuring numerous poetic texts and text analysis. This book combines performance, musical analysis, and explores the relationship between poetry and music. It is a

⁵ Ifeanyi Sunny Odinye, “Phonology of Mandarin Chinese: A Comparison of Pinyin and IPA,” *Journal of Chinese Studies*, no.4 (Winter 2015).

⁶ Ann C Fehn, Rufus Hallmark, Harry E. Seelig and Jürgen Thym, *Of Poetry and Song: Approaches to the Nineteenth-Century Lied* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt14brvsr>.

⁷ Deborah Stein, and Robert Spillman, *Poetry into Song: Performance and Analysis of Lieder*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA 2010).

helpful guide for the analysis and interpretation of poetry and texts in performing *Lieder*.

The Oxford University Press published a book entitled *Songs in Motion: Rhythm and Meter in the German Lied*⁸ in 2010. In this book, Yonatan Malin explores rhythm and meter in the German *Lied*. He further provides new methodologies for analysis and readings of songs by Mendelssohn, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf. This book gives singers a way to better understand the structure and rhythm of German poetry that are associated with *Lieder*.

In 2007, Emma Louise Blake wrote in her bachelor's degree thesis, entitled "A Methodology for Thorough Text Preparation of German Lieder"⁹ that the understanding of text and an emotional connection with its meaning are crucial to the successful singing and performing of *Lieder*. This thesis aims to create a way of preparing the text that inspires detailed observation and creative thought to enable a singer with limited understanding of the German language to better acquaint him-/her-/themselves with the repertoire.

E.C. Schirmer Music Company published a book entitled *Diction: Italian, Latin, French, German; the sounds and 81 exercises for singing them*¹⁰ in 1975. In this book, John Moriarty provides a comprehensive guide to the diction of Italian, Latin, French, and German with many practical exercises utilizing a comparative method for American singers.

⁸ Yonatan Malin, *Songs in Motion: Rhythm and Meter in the German Lied* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), <https://doi-org.wvu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195340051.001.0001>.

⁹ Emma Blake, "A Methodology for Thorough Text Preparation of German Lieder," (Phd diss., Edith Cowan University, 2007), 1-44.

¹⁰ John Moriarty, *Diction: Italian, Latin, French, German; the Sounds and 81 Exercises for Singing Them* (Boston: E.C. Schirmer Music Co, 1975).

William Odom and Benno Schollum wrote a book entitled *German for singers: a textbook of diction and phonetics*¹¹ (the second edition) which was published by Schirmer Cengage Learning in 1998. The book was first published in 1981. The first edition offers an effective and helpful guide to German diction for singers of every genre. The second edition is corrected, revised, and updated, and it includes an audio CD to demonstrate the sounds of the German language.

¹¹ William Odom and Benno Schollum, *German for Singers: A Textbook of Diction and Phonetics* (Boston: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 1998).

Chapter III: Chinese Pinyin and IPA

1. Brief History and Introduction of Chinese Pinyin and IPA

The Chinese language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language system in Asia. It is also normally called Hanyu or Guoyu (in Taiwan). Generally, Chinese contains seven principal dialect groups which are Mandarin (or Northern Chinese), Wu, Gan, Kejia, Xiang, Yue (or Cantonese), and Min. In China, Mandarin is widely used because more than half of all Chinese people speak the language. Mandarin is a tone language, which means if a tone is changed, the meaning of the word will be changed as well.¹² In general, Mandarin is written in Chinese characters that contain syllables and words. However, unlike other languages, Chinese characters are not phonetic and alphabetic; on the contrary, they are pictographic or ideographic like ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, which means they display combinations of pictures or symbols to convey meaning.¹³ Therefore, someone learning Mandarin cannot rely solely on looking at Chinese characters, but rather, transcriptions are required for study.¹⁴ Most transcription systems are based on the Roman alphabet, and they are termed ‘romanization’ systems.¹⁵

The first Chinese alphabetical writing system was created by the Italian Matteo Ricci in 1605.¹⁶ After that, before Pinyin was created, numerous alphabetical systems were established to help people write the pronunciation of Chinese words

¹² Khor Suan Gek, Arriaga Ramirez Lidia, Mah Yih Boon, “Error Analysis in Hanyu Pinyin Pronunciation Among the Undergraduates from University Sains Malaysia (USM), Engineering Campus,” *The Asian Conference on Language Learning* (2013), 293.

¹³ Odinye, “Phonology of Mandarin Chinese,” 52.

¹⁴ Ibid, 52.

¹⁵ Ibid, 52.

¹⁶ Haishu Ni, *The History of Chinese Pinyin Movement*, (Shanghai: Shubao, 1948), 5, 6, 66.

using the English alphabet. Among them, the Wade-Giles system was the most famous; it was introduced to the Chinese people by the British Scholar Thomas Wade in 1892.¹⁷

Pinyin is also called *Hanyu Pinyin*, which means to sound or to spell out. It is based on the Latin alphabet, and it is a romanization system for Mandarin Chinese people who speak the Mandarin dialect of the Beijing area in China.¹⁸ Pinyin specifically combines Mandarin sounds with the Roman alphabet, and was created for Chinese speakers to learn the writing and pronunciation of Chinese.

The Chinese government determined the meaning and standard for Mandarin in 1955.¹⁹ In 2000, the legal status of Mandarin was defined by the National Language Law (NLL) of China, which also normalized Chinese characters as the uniform language of the country.²⁰ Since then, Pinyin has become the official phonetic system that is used in learning the pronunciation of Mandarin in China.²¹

IPA, or International Phonetic Alphabet, is another phonetic system which has become a commonly used language tool to learn most of the major languages spoken around the world. It is a method of pronunciation based on the Roman alphabet. The IPA was originally created as a pedagogical tool to teach foreign languages by the newly established International Phonetic Association that was primarily made up of

¹⁷ Ibid, 5, 6, 66.

¹⁸ Ibid, 53.

¹⁹ Kehui.Wu, “Difficulties for Chinese Vocalists in Singing French Art Song.” (D.M.A. diss.,Arizona State University, 2019),
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2228132720/869D55F79E1A4BCDPQ/1?accountid=2837>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

French and British language teachers.²² These teachers aim to create one alphabet in which a given symbol represents the same sound over all languages.²³ In IPA, each symbol stands for a single and special sound, which is called a *phoneme(sound)*.²⁴ The IPA system was largely used to help children learn the pronunciation of foreign languages at first, and then it became a useful tool for scientific phonetic studies.²⁵

The IPA has become a useful and necessary language tool for pianists, vocal coaches, and voice students. Vocal coaches should be required to learn and master IPA in order to teach vocal students the pronunciation of different languages. Nowadays, IPA is widely used in universities, voice lessons, and diction lessons. Most music schools in the United States offer vocal coaching and singing diction class for voice students, particularly for classical voice students. In the United States, almost all classical voice students are required to learn IPA to sing in various languages, some of which are Italian, French, German, English, Russian, and Spanish, among others. Learning IPA can greatly enhance voice students' ability to accurately pronounce languages that are not native to them when they sing opera arias or art songs. Thus, classical voice students should be required to learn IPA either in singing or in vocal coaching, so that they are able to pronounce the languages correctly. In short, the ultimate goal for voice students when learning IPA is to study and accurately sing different languages with much greater nuance than simply imitating the pronunciation of others.

²² David Adams, "An Introduction to Individual Sounds," 1.

²³ Ibid, 1.

²⁴ Ibid, 1.

²⁵ Robert W Albright, "The International Phonetic Alphabet: Its Backgrounds and Development". *International Journal of American Linguistics* (1958): 24.

2. Differences between Chinese Pinyin and the IPA

Chinese Pinyin and the IPA are all based on the Latin alphabet and provide the correct pronunciation of languages. Pinyin is a popular language tool specifically for Chinese who speak Mandarin. It cannot be used for foreigners who need help with the pronunciation of their own languages, but can only be used in the Chinese language system, making the pronunciation easier for Mandarin speakers. In contrast, the apparent advantage of the IPA is that the system was created for various foreign languages, offering a quick, correct, and easy way for people to learn accurate pronunciation. The IPA covers the accurate pronunciation of primary singing languages, including Italian, French, German, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, and many others.

The Chinese Pinyin system contains the twenty-six letters of the Roman alphabet with the letter “v” of the Roman letter system replaced by the letter “u” in Pinyin. Pinyin includes initials, finals, and tones. Initials are consonants; finals are vowels. Pinyin consonants consist of plosives, nasals, fricatives, affricates, and lateral approximants. Pinyin vowels contain simple finals, compound finals, nasal finals, and back nasals. To sum up, Pinyin contains 22 consonants and 23 vowels. Below are the Pinyin consonant and vowel sounds and the IPA transformation (see Table 1 and Table 2 below)

Table 1: Pinyin consonants and IPA transformation²⁶

		Labial	Alveolar	Retroflex	Alveolo-palatal	Velar
Plosive	Unaspirated	b [b]	d [t]			g [k]
	Aspirated	p [p ^h]	t [t ^h]			k [k ^h]

²⁶ Wu, “Difficulties for Chinese Vocalists in Singing French Art Song,” 4.

Nasal		m [m]	n [n]			ng [ŋ]
Affricate	Unaspirated		z [ts]	zh [tʂ]	j [tɕ]	
	Aspirated		c [tʂʰ]	ch [tʂʰ]	q [tɕʰ]	
Fricative		f [f]	s [s]	sh [ʂ] and r [ʐ]	x [ɕ]	h [x]
Lateral approximant			l [l]			

Table 2.1: Pinyin vowels (Monophthongs) and IPA conversion²⁷

Tongue position	Dorsal vowel	Apical vowel	Retroflex vowel
closed	i [i], ü [y], u [u]	-i [ɿ], -i [ʅ]	
semi-closed	e [ɤ], o [o]		
center			er [ɤ]
semi-open	ê [ɛ]		
open	ɑ [A]		

Note: [ɿ] and [ʅ] are special Chinese sounds which are not included in IPA.

Table 2.2 Pinyin Compound vowels and IPA conversion²⁸

First vowel stressed	ai [ai]	ei [ei]	ao [au]	ou [ou]	
Last vowel stressed	ia [iA]	ie [iɛ]	ua [uA]	uo [uo]	üe [yɛ]
Middle vowel stressed	io [iu]	iou [iou]	uai [uai]	uei [uei]	

²⁷ Ibid, 4.

²⁸ Ibid, 5.

Note: [A] is a special Chinese sound which is not included in IPA.

The IPA system is much more complex and accurate than the Pinyin system. Since the creation of the IPA in 1888, it has been revised several times. When looking at the revisions of an official IPA chart, it is obvious that the number of symbols used in the IPA system is much larger than in the Pinyin system. (See Appendix A). However, the IPA has shortcomings. According to Encyclopedia Britannica's resources, first, the IPA did not become the uniform system for phonetic transcription that its designers had intended. Second, it is used less commonly in America than in Europe.²⁹ Despite the shortcomings, it is still being widely used by pianists, vocal coaches, and singers throughout the world.

The Pinyin system is not difficult to learn for Mandarin speakers; the most challenging aspect of the Pinyin system is that there are many different sounds represented by the same letter.³⁰ For example, in table 2.1 and 2.2, the “e” in Pinyin can be pronounced as [e], [æ] or [ɛ]. Therefore, it is hard for speakers to decide how the symbol should be pronounced. In addition, the pronunciation of Pinyin is a significant element in learning Mandarin because the four tones in words are difficult to learn for people who are non-Mandarin speakers. For example, the four tones of the syllable “la” are: (1) lā, (2) lá, (3) lǎ, (4) là. See Table 3 below.

Table 3: Examples of Four Tones in Chinese Syllable and Similarity with English Pronunciation

²⁹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, *International Phonetic Alphabet Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 3, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/International-Phonetic-Alphabet>.

³⁰ Odinye, “Phonology of Mandarin Chinese,” 51.

Lā is 1st tone	Pronounced stable high sound, similar to the pronunciation of “drinking”
Lá is 2nd tone	Rises from mid-level to high, similar to the pronunciation of “what”
Lǎ is 3rd tone	Pronounced from mid-low to low, similar to the pronunciation of “program”
Là is 4th tone	Pronounced from high to low, similar to the pronunciation of “dog”

In addition to the four tones, there is a fifth tone, which is neutral and written without any marks. It is written as “la.” The neutral tone can always be used in the last syllable of a word in Chinese, such as the word “Xi Gua” (watermelon); the “a” can either be pronounced as the 1st tone or the neutral tone.

There are also some sounds in Chinese that do not appear in other languages, such as [A],[ɿ] and [ʅ]. The IPA system does not contain these sounds; this will cause phonetic problems for Mandarin singers when they learn foreign languages for singing. The challenges and solutions of using the IPA in German for Mandarin singers will be addressed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: German Phonetic Problems for Mandarin Singers

1. Difficulties in Learning German IPA

German, along with Italian, French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, are all branches of the Indo-European (or Indo-Germanic) family of languages.³¹ Sound patterns of German are more similar to English than to Italian or French. The difficulty of German includes the pronunciation of the language, which is sometimes described as “guttural.”³² Because of the difficulties in grammar and pronunciation, German can be considered a difficult language to master.³³ To most Mandarin-Chinese speakers, the German language probably sounds dark, backward, and unclear, perhaps because of the sound patterns. There are a number of elements in the German language that make it especially challenging for native Mandarin speakers. Umlaut vowels, ichlauts, achlauts, and dental consonants can feel and sound very foreign.³⁴ However, diction problems in German can be gradually resolved by learning German IPA. Although there are German phonetic problems for Mandarin-Chinese singers, learning the IPA in German and correctly pronouncing it can produce a clear, forward, and bright German diction, promoting a beautiful legato, and good vocalism. Before addressing the German phonetic problems, a comparison between Mandarin Chinese consonant and vowel sounds in original Pinyin and IPA is necessary. See Table 4.1 and 4.2 below.

Table 4.1: Mandarin Chinese Consonant Sounds in Both Pinyin and IPA³⁵

³¹ Lanzrein and Cross, *The Singer’s Guide to German Diction*, 4.

³² Adams, “An Introduction to Individual Sounds,” 131.

³³ Ibid, 131.

³⁴ A “glottal stop” or “glottal separation” is a distinctive characteristic of German, which means the beginning words of vowel are always initiated with a slight glottal stroke.

³⁵ Odinye, “Phonology of Mandarin Chinese,” 57.

Pinyin	b	p	m	f	d	t	n	l	g	k	h	j	q	x	z
IPA	[p]	[pʰ]	[m]	[f]	[t]	[tʰ]	[n]	[l]	[k]	[kʰ]	[x]	[tɕ]	[tɕʰ]	[ɕ]	[ts]

Table 4.1 continued

Pinyin	C	s	zh	ch	sh	r
IPA	[tʂʰ]	[s]	[tʂ]	[tʂʰ]	[ʂ]	[ʐ]

Table 4.2: Mandarin Chinese six vowel sounds in both Pinyin and IPA³⁶

Pinyin	a	o	e	i	u	ü
IPA	[a]	[ɔ]	[ə]	[i]	[u]	[y]

Table 4.3: Mandarin Chinese mixed vowels sounds in both Pinyin and IPA³⁷

Pinyin	ai	ao	ei	ia	iao	ie	iu	ou	ua	uai	üe	ui	uo
IPA	[ia]	[ɑʊ]	[eɪ]	[ia]	[iɑʊ]	[iɛ]	[iɔʊ]	[oʊ]	[ua]	[uɑɪ]	[yœ]	[uəɪ]	[uɔ]

Table 4.3 continued

Pinyin	an	en	ian	in	uan	üan	un	ün	-i	-i	er
IPA	[an]	[ən]	[iɛn]	[in]	[uan]	[yɛn]	[uən]	[yn]	[ɿ]	[ʅ]	[ər]

³⁶ Ibid, 57.

³⁷ Ibid, 57.

Note: the an, ian, uan, üan, en, in, ün are front-nasal finals, which are vowel+*n*

Table 4.4: Mandarin Chinese back-nasal final sounds in both Pinyin and IPA

Pinyin	ang	eng	iang	ing	iong	ong	uang	ueng
IPA	[ɑŋ]	[ɛŋ]	[iɑŋ]	[iŋ]	[iɔŋ]	[ʊŋ]	[uɑŋ]	[uɛŋ]

Note: back-nasal finals are vowel+*ng*

As the tables above demonstrate, there are apparent similarities in pronunciation between Chinese Pinyin and IPA systems. However, differences of pronunciation between Pinyin and German IPA also exist. The different pronunciations of German IPA are not always equivalent with the Pinyin pronunciation, which presents a challenge for Mandarin-Chinese singers. Therefore, Mandarin-Chinese speakers may pronounce them incorrectly when singing *Lieder*. Solutions to learn and correctly pronounce German IPA will be presented in this chapter.

2. Phonetic difficulties and solutions for Mandarin-Chinese singers

2.1 Vowel differences between German IPA and Pinyin

As discussed earlier, it is very difficult to accurately pronounce German IPA because of the differences in creating German and Mandarin phonemes. Generally speaking, German vowels can be separated into three categories: six vowels, three umlaut vowels, and three diphthongs. The six vowels are [a, e, i, o, u, y]. The umlaut vowels are [ö], [ü], and [ä], which produce six different vowel sounds. There are three diphthongs in German: [ae], [ao], and [ɔø], which produce three different sounds. The

six vowels [a, e, i, o, u, y] contain fifteen sounds in German IPA. Table 5 lists these German vowels in IPA with word examples and the equivalent sounds in Pinyin.

Table 5.1: The six German vowels in IPA and Pinyin equivalent with word examples

German single vowels in IPA	German word examples with IPA	Pinyin equivalent	Chinese word examples with Pinyin and IPA
a (open and short)	Amerika [a 'me:rika]	a	踏 ta [ta]
a: (close and long)	altar [al 'ta:r]	a	啊 a [a]
o (close and long)	not [no:t]	o	哟 yo [jo]
ɔ (open and short)	wonne ['vɔ nə]	none	none
e=[e:] pronounce it similar to [i:]	der [de:r]	none	none
e=[ɛ] (open and short)	des [dɛs]	none	none
e= [ə] schuwa	habe ['ha:bə]	e	恶 e [ə]
i: (close and long)	musik [mu 'zi:k]	i	依 yi [yi]
ɪ (open and short)	hin [hɪn]	none	none
u: (close and long)	mut [mu:t]	u	苦 ku [ku]
ʊ (open and short)	mutter ['mʊ tər]	none	none
y=[y:] (close and long)	lyrik ['ly:rik]	ü	鱼 yü [yü]
y=[ʏ] (open and short)	myrte ['myr tə]	none	none

y [i]	tyrol [ti 'ro:l]	i	依 yi [yi]
y [j]	york [jɔrk]	y	压 ya [ja]

To reiterate, the six German vowels produce fifteen sounds. Each vowel contains short/long and close/open sounds, which makes the pronunciation variable and difficult. The six sounds [ɔ], [e:], [ɛ], [ɪ], [ʊ], [ʏ] in German vowels are missing in the Pinyin system, and these missing vowels are pronounced as open and short vowels.

Table 5.2 German umlaut vowels in IPA and Pinyin equivalent with word examples

German umlaut vowels in IPA	German word examples with IPA	Pinyin equivalent	Chinese word examples with Pinyin and IPA
ö=ø (close and long)	König ['kø: niç]	none	none
ö=œ (open and short)	Hölle ['hœ læ]	none	none
ü=y (close and long)	üben ['y: bən]	ü	鱼 yü [yü]
ü=ɥ (open and short)	Glück [glɥk]	none	none
ä=[ɛ:] long	Mädchen ['mɛ:t çən]	none	none
ä=[ɛ] short	Äpfel ['ɛp fəl]	none	none

As Table 5.2 shows, the three umlaut vowels [ö], [ü], [ä] in German IPA can produce six different sounds. The pronunciation of ö [ø] is the mixed sound of [o] and [e], which produces a close and long vowel. In contrast, the pronunciation of ö [œ] is the mixed sound of [ɔ] and [ɛ], which produces an open and short vowel. The pronunciation of ü [ʏ] is shown in Table 5.1 and is a short and open mixed sound of [ʊ] and [ɪ]. As stated above, these sounds [ʏ] [ɛ] [œ], have no equivalents in the

Pinyin system.

Table 5.3 Three German diphthongs in IPA and Pinyin equivalent with word examples

German diphthongs in IPA	German word examples with IPA	Pinyin equivalent	Chinese word examples with Pinyin and IPA
ae pronounce it similar to ai in the English æ	Mai [mae]	ai	爱 [ai] [ai]
ao pronounce it similar to aʊ in the English	haus [haos]	ao	熬 [ao] [aʊ]
ɔø pronounce it similar to ɔi in the English	neu [nɔø]	none	none

Table 5.3 shows that the German diphthong sound [ɔø] has no equivalent sound in the Pinyin system. The other two diphthongs, [ae] and [ao], are part of the Chinese Pinyin system. However, there are slight pronunciation differences between the German and Chinese pronunciations of these diphthongs; in German, the symbols “e” in [ae] and “o” in [ao] are clearly pronounced. In contrast, in Pinyin, the symbols “i” in [ai] and “o” in [ao] are not clearly pronounced, and the pronunciation can hardly be heard. Therefore, when pronouncing the word 爱 (love)[ai] and 熬 (suffering)[ao] in Pinyin, they sound like 爱 [a] and 熬 [a]. In German these sounds must be clearly pronounced to produce a true diphthong, otherwise the clarity of meaning and the beauty of the text is lost.

2.2 Solutions for Mandarin singers when singing vowels in German IPA

Apart from the diphthongs discussed above, there are nine vowel sounds in German that do not exist in Pinyin. They are [ɔ], [e:], [ɛ], [ɪ], [ʊ], [ʏ], [ø], [œ], [ɛ:]. Six of

these sounds, [ɔ], [ɛ],[ɪ],[ʊ],[ʏ],[œ], are pronounced open and short, the two [e:] and [ø] are pronounced close and long. The [ɛ:] is a long vowel but not a close vowel. The letter ä [ɛ:] has long and short vowels.³⁸ These nine sounds, present in German but not in Mandarin, prove to be problematic for Mandarin singers. The pronunciation of these sounds cannot be copied from Pinyin system, which means Mandarin singers need strategies to learn to pronounce them properly. The useful ways and exercises will be shown and explained.

The [ɔ] and [ʊ] sound

There is no “o” [ɔ] sound in the Pinyin system, but the closed [o] sound exists in Pinyin. It is important to distinguish between the [ɔ] and [o] sounds in German *Lieder* because if they are interchanged, the meaning of the word changes. For example, “*Wonne*,” which employs the [ɔ], means “bliss,” while the word “*wohne*,” which employs the [o] sound, means “I live.” The [o] sound is rounded, closed, and long. Compared to the closed [o] sound, [ɔ] requires a more open jaw. Usually, the duration of the sound is shorter than that of the [o]. Lowering the jaw position can easily produce the [ɔ] sound and make the jaw relaxed. The lips should be rounded. Singing the sound forward, bright, and clear is very important when singing *Lieder*. Therefore, the back of the tongue should be released forward in order to make the [ɔ] sound forward rather than swallowed by the back of the tongue. Below are some exercises that are helpful in creating the necessary phonemes. Exercise 1 helps with distinguishing between [o] and [ɔ].

³⁸ Joan Wall, Robert Caldwell, Sheila Allen, and Tracy Gavilanes. *Diction for Singers: A Concise Reference for English Italian Latin German French and Spanish Pronunciation* (Redmond WA: Diction for Singers, 2012), 194, <https://archive.org/details/dictionforsinger0000wall>.

Exercise 1:



The u [ʊ] sound is pronounced open and short, as in the English word “book”. It is pronounced with the lips slightly rounded and protruding.³⁹ Practicing from [ɔ] to [ʊ] is an easy and helpful way to distinguish the pronunciations of these two sounds because the only change required is that the lips become more narrowed, forward, and rounded. When singing [ʊ], the jaw should also be placed in lower position, and the back of the tongue released. Exercise 2 is the vocalise from [ɔ] to [ʊ]. Exercise 3 is the vocalise adding consonants. Adding consonants to vowel practice from [ɔ] to [ʊ] is a helpful way to learn the coordination of pronouncing these sounds in words such as “Wonne”, “Mutter”, “Buch”, and so on.

Exercise 2:



Exercise 3: (consonant added)

³⁹ Ibid, 207.

vɔ mɔ vɔ mɔ vɔ mɔ vɔ mɔ vɔ

Note: Besides the consonants V and M, other consonants could also be applied to this exercises, such as (tɔ dɔ; nɔ mɔ; etc). Singers could also use one consonant in these two sounds, such as (nɔ nɔ) in order to make the exercise easier and only practice one consonant at a time.

The [ɥ] and [ɪ] sound

The open and short [ɥ] sound is the mixed sound of open u [ʊ] and open i [ɪ] sound. It sounds like the open “鱼” (yü) sound in the Pinyin system. The jaw position is lower than the close [y:], and the lips are rounded. Practicing singing [ʊ] and [ɪ] is a good way to achieve the correct pronunciation of the [ɥ] sound. See Exercise 4 and Exercise 5 below.

Exercise 4:

ʊ I Y

Exercise 5:

ʊ I Y ʊ I Y

The short, open [ɪ] sound is often difficult for Mandarin singers, but it is essential to learn to pronounce it correctly to properly convey the meaning of a word

being sung. For example, the word *in*, which means the same thing as in English, is pronounced with the open [ɪ]. The word *ihn*, however, which is pronounced with the closed [i] sound, means “him.” One is a preposition and one a pronoun. Confusing the pronunciation also obscures the meaning. To pronounce the sound accurately, the jaw position should be lower and more relaxed than the close [i:] sound, and the back of the tongue should be released; the tip of the tongue is placed right under the lower teeth, and with tongue slightly forward. The pronunciation of this sound is open, short, and quick. Vocal exercises moving from the [ɔ] to [ɪ] are a helpful way for Mandarin singers to practice the pronunciation of these two sounds. The tongue movement must be raised from a slightly flatter position [ɔ] to a more forward position (higher in the front) [ɪ] by putting the tip of the tongue right under the lower teeth, and the back of the tongue should be raised a little. Moving from the [ɔ] to [ɪ] sound is easy and natural because it simply changes the rounded lip to open lip. See Exercise 6 below:

Exercise 6:

ɔ ɪ ɔ ɪ ɔ ɪ ɔ ɪ ɔ

The [e:] and [ɐ]

The letter “e” has three sounds in German IPA: [e:], [ɛ], and the schwa [ə]. The [e:] sound is pronounced close and long. Pronouncing the [e:] with the high arch

of your tongue closer to the roof of your mouth than for an American [e].⁴⁰ It is pronounced almost like [i:] in our ears. It is a very confusing and difficult sound for Mandarin singers because there is only the schwa e [ə] sound in Pinyin system, and the sound of schwa[ə] in Pinyin system is very different from the sound [i:]. Table 5.1 shows that the schwa [ə] in German IPA is pronounced the same as the vowel “e” [ə] sound in the Pinyin system. However, the Pinyin system does not have the [e:] or [ɛ] sounds that are sound in German. Therefore, when Mandarin singers sing the [e:] sound, most of them pronounce it like [ə]. In addition, the open [ɛ] is difficult for Mandarin singers to pronounce. Exercises that focused on the [e:] and [ɛ] sounds could be very beneficial to Mandarin singers. Exercises 7 through 12 below demonstrate some of the ways in which Mandarin Singers can practice the sound.

Exercise 7:

i: e: i: e: i:

Exercise 8: (consonant added)

di: de: der:

Exercise 9: (practice between e: and other vowels)

de: a: de: a: der

Another word “der” [de:v] is frequently found in *Lieder*, which is pronounced

⁴⁰ Ibid, 196.

almost like the sound [di:v̥]. According to David Adams, the most significant point is that the letter *r* is not a flipped *r*; here it becomes a vowel sound and pronounces the [v̥].⁴¹ The [v̥] sound is like the schwa, but with a darker tone and it sounds like the light [a]. Thus, in German IPA, the word “der” is the combined pronunciation of [de:] + [v̥]. There is no stress on the [v̥]. From writer’s observations, many singers including Mandarin singers normally incorrectly pronounce the word “der” as [dɛr], which is a sound of [dɛ] plus a flipped *r*, or [dɛ], an incorrect sound of [dɛ] plus the removal of [v̥] sound, or ['dɛr],[dɛv̥], [dɛ'r],[dɛ'v̥]. All of these pronunciations are wrong. The correct pronunciation is [de:v̥]. Therefore, Mandarin singers need to practice the correct sound of [v̥].

The [ɛ] and [ɛ:] sound

In German *Lieder*, the frequently used words “des”, “denn”, “es”, “Welt”, “Herz”, “her” are all pronounced with the [ɛ] sound. Compared to the close and long [e:] sound, the [ɛ] sound is a short and open sound; you pronounce the [ɛ] with the tongue slightly more forward and the jaw more open than an English [ɛ].⁴² As stated earlier, the [ɛ:] sound is one of the sounds of the umlaut vowel ä, so it only fits the category for long or short vowels. Therefore, Mandarin singers might pronounce the [ɛ] sound short and open and pronounce the [ɛ:] sound long and open. This simply means one should hold the [ɛ:] sound longer than [ɛ] in singing *Lieder*. Practicing between “ɛ” and “a” is a good way to help Mandarin singers learn new muscular patterns of behavior such as opening the jaw and letting the tongue more forward more. See Exercise 10, 11, and 12 below.

Exercise 10:

⁴¹ David Adams, “An Introduction to Individual Sounds,” 135.

⁴² Wall, Caldwell, Allen, and Gavilanes. *Diction for Singers*, 196.



ε a ε

Or ε:

Exercise 11: (scale practice)



ε a ε

Or ε:

Exercise 12: (words added)



a des des a des a des

Or de:s

The [ø] and [œ] sound

In German IPA, the closed ö [ø] sound is the mixed sound of closed [o] and closed [e]. This closed [ø] sound can be found in the words “können”, “schön”, “könig”. The pronunciation is similar to the closed “eu” or “oeu” in French. It has no pronunciation equivalent in the English and Pinyin system. Therefore, it causes difficulties for Mandarin singers to accurately pronounce it. In order to reach the sound of [ø], the lips must be completely rounded and close together and the opening of the mouth must be small, until the long closed ö sound is perfected.⁴³ To achieve the correct and

⁴³ Kurt Adler, *Phonetics and Diction in Singing*, 112.

beautiful pronunciation, Mandarin singers should reach the sound of closed [o] and closed [e] first, then practice pronouncing the closed [ø] sound. The closed [e] sound is similar to the sound [i:], so the combination of vocal practice between the closed [o], [e], and [i:] is necessary. See Exercise 13 below:

Exercise 13:



Compared to the closed [ø] sound, the [œ] sound is short and open. It is a mixed sound of open [ɔ] and [ɛ] sound. It is like the open “eu” sound in French, as found in the pronunciation of the word “coeur”. However, it has no pronunciation equivalent in English and in the Pinyin system. In German, the [œ] sound is pronounced short and open whenever it stands before more than one consonant.⁴⁴ This sound can be found in the words “köche”, “schlösser”, “höller”, and so on. Mandarin singers might imagine the [œ] sound is just the opened sound of [ø]. To keep the correct pronunciation, singers should maintain the rounded lip position until the beginning of the next sound.⁴⁵ It is the same as the closed [ø] sound, reaching the opened [ɔ] and [ɛ] sound is necessary to achieve the correct sound of open [œ] sound. As stated earlier, vocalizing the [ɔ] sound helps to reach the correct sound of [ɔ], and vocalizing the [a] sound is a helpful way to achieve the accurate [ɛ] sound. See the exercise 14 below:

Exercise 14

⁴⁴ Ibid,113.

⁴⁵ Wall, Caldwell, Allen, and Gavilanes. *Diction for Singers*, 205.



3.1 Consonant differences between German IPA and Pinyin

In German IPA, there are distinctive consonants that obviously differ from Pinyin system: the consonant “ch” [ç] and [x] pronunciations, the dental consonants *d, t, n, l*, voiced and unvoiced consonants *b, d, g*, double consonants, and glottal stop. The special letter combination “ch” pronounced in *ichlaut* [ç] and the *achlaut* [x] sounds are unfamiliar and challenging for Mandarin speakers. These two distinctive consonant sounds are pronounced voicelessly. There are four dental consonants in German IPA: *d, t, n*, and *l*. Chinese Pinyin has *d, t, n*, and *l*, but they are not dental consonants. To pronounce a dental consonant correctly, make dental consonants with the tip of your tongue touching the gum line behind your upper teeth.⁴⁶ The three consonants *b, d, g* can either be pronounced voiced or unvoiced in German IPA. When they have their normal and voiced sounds, the pronunciations are the same as in Pinyin. In contrast, when they pronounced unvoiced, the *b, d*, and *g* are pronounced *p, t*, and *k*. The correct unvoiced pronunciations *b, d, g* is not difficult to Mandarin singers because Pinyin has similar *p, t*, and *k* pronunciations. It is necessary for Mandarin singers to remember the rules of pronunciation when they sound voiced and unvoiced. However, the roles of pronunciation in German IPA is not the discussion scope of this paper.

Pronouncing German consonants is also challenging for Mandarin singers.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 185.

Table 6 lists all twenty-eight German consonants. As the table shows, the pronunciation of [tʃ], [ʒ], [kv], flipped [r], [ʃ], [v], [ks], [ç], and [x] are absent in Pinyin system.

Table 6: German consonants in IPA and Pinyin equivalent with words examples

German consonants in IPA	German word example with IPA	Pinyin equivalent	Chinese word example with Pinyin and IPA
b = [voiced b]	lieben ['li:bən]	b	爸 ba [ba]
b = [unvoiced p]	gibt [gi:pt]	p	爬 pa [pa]
c = [ts]	cito ['tsi:to]	c	才 cai [ts ai]
c=[tʃ]	cello ['tʃɛ lo]	none	none
d=[voiced d]	anders ['an dərs]	d	底 di [di]
d=[unvoiced t]	Tod [to:t]	t	它 ta [ta]
f	fein [faen]	f	分 fen [fən]
g=[voiced g]	geben ['ge:bən]	g	古 gu [gu]
g=[unvoiced k]	Tag [ta:k]	k	可 ke [kə]

Table 6 continued.

g= [ʒ]	genie [ʒe 'ni:]	none	none
h	hut [hu:t]	h	喝 he [hə]
j=[j]	jahr [ja:r]	y	牙 ya [ya]
k	kind [kint]	k	可 ke [kə]

l	allen ['a lən]	l	累 lei [lei]
m	mann [man]	m	马 ma [ma]
n	sinn [zɪn]	n	你 ni [ni]
ng=[ŋ]	mango ['maŋgo]	eng	增 zeng [zəŋ]
p	knospe ['knɔs pə]	p	谱 pu [pu]
q=[kv]	quelle ['kvɛ lə]	none	none
r= flipped [r]	Tür [ty:r]	none	none
s=[s]	als [als]	s	四 si [sɪ]
s=[z]	sanft [zanft]	c	蔡 cai [ts ai]
ch,sch=[ʃ]	schnell [fnɛl] Chanson [ʃɑsɔ:]	none	none
t	mut [mu:t]	t	它 ta [ta]
w,v=[v]	Vase ['va:zə] Winter ['vɪn tər]	none	none
v=[f]	Vater ['fa:tər]	f	发 fa [fa]
x=[ks]	Nixen ['nɪ ksən]	none	none
ch=[ç]	Ich [ɪç]	none	none
ch=[x]	Buch [bu:x]	h	喝 he [xə]

3.2 Solutions for Mandarin Singers when Singing German Consonants

The [ks] sound

The unvoiced [ks] sounds cannot be found in Pinyin, but Pinyin has the sound of [k] and [s]. Therefore, when practicing [k] and [s] separately one can easily pronounce the combination sound of [ks]. The same approach could be applied to the sound of [pf]. Just remember, the [ks] and [pf] are unvoiced sounds. See exercise 15 below:

Exercise 15:

1. pronounce unvoiced [kə, kə, kə], then pronounce unvoiced [si si si si]
2. pronounce [kəsi, kəsi, kəsi, kəsi], then finally make the sound [ks]
3. pronounce unvoiced [p p p p] → unvoiced [f f f f] → unvoiced [pf pf pf pf]

The [v] and the [kv] sound

The sound of [v] is a voiced and fricative sound, which is missing in Pinyin. There is also no [v] letter in the Pinyin system. Singers need to touch the upper teeth to the lower lip to make a vibration between them. The [f] sound in Pinyin is a fricative and unvoiced sound, which is similar to the [v] sound. Therefore, Mandarin singers could reach the correct [v] sound by practicing the [f] sound first, and then switching the sound to [v] after pronouncing the [f] sound. Exercise 15 is the reading exercise.

Exercise 16:

Pronounce the following sounds and change the fricative unvoiced [f] sound to voiced [v] sound.

- 1.[fo fo fo fo] and [vo vo vo vo]
- 2.[fa fa fa fa] and [va va va va]

The same approach could be applied to the [kv] sound. Chinese Pinyin has the [k]

sound. Mandarin singers could then practice the [f] sound first, then add the [k] sound after pronouncing the [f] sound, then change the [kf] sound to [kv]. see exercise 16 below:

Exercise 17:

Step 1: pronounce [fa,fa,fa]

Step 2: pronounce [va, va, va]

Step 3: pronounce [kfa, kfa, kfa]

Step 4: pronounce [kva, kva, kva]

Exercise 18:

Step 1: pronounce [fɛ, fɛ, fɛ]⁴⁷

Step 2: pronounce [vɛ,vɛ,vɛ],

Step 3: pronounce [kfɛ, kfɛ, kfɛ]

Step 4: pronounce [kvɛ, kvɛ, kvɛ], then try the sound [kvɛ lə] (quelle)

The flipped [r] and others

The [ʃ],[ʒ], and [tʃ] sound

The [ʃ], [ʒ], [tʃ] sounds are fricative consonants which are absent in Pinyin. These three fricative consonants might be challenging for Mandarin singers. Chinese Pinyin has “sh [ʃ], “r” [ʒ], and “ch” [tʃ^h] sounds. These three sounds are different from the [ʃ], [ʒ], and [tʃ] sound. In Pinyin, the “sh [ʃ] and “ch” [tʃ^h] are unvoiced retroflex consonants, but the “r” [ʒ] is a voiced retroflex consonant. In German IPA, the [ʃ] and [tʃ] are unvoiced postalveolar fricatives, but the [ʒ] is a voiced postalveolar fricative.

⁴⁷ The [ɛ] sound was discussed in the paper earlier. Refer to the pronunciation of German vowels.

When pronouncing “sh” [ʃ], “ch” [tʃʰ], “r” [ʒ], the tip of the tongue flips back toward the hard palate to pronounce these three sounds backward. When pronouncing [ʃ], [ʒ], and [tʃ], the tip of the tongue moves toward the lower teeth ridge, which makes the pronunciation sounds more forward. Therefore, to achieve the correct sounds of [ʃ] and [tʃ], Mandarin singers should first practice the “sh” [ʃ] and “ch” [tʃʰ], then move the tip of the tongue from the hard palate to the lower teeth ridge, so that they could pronounce [ʃ] and [tʃ] forward. The same approach could be applied to the [ʒ] sound: practice pronouncing “r” [ʒ] first, then move the tip of the tongue from the hard palate to the lower teeth ridge to correctly pronounce the [ʒ] forward. See the exercise below:

Exercise 19:

Step 1: pronounce Chinese words:

沙 [ʃa], 舌 [ʃə]

Step 2: pronounce German words:

chef [ʃɛf], chanson [ʃɑ̃ sɔːn]

Step 3: pronounce [ʃ ʃ ʃ ʃ]

↓ feel the difference

Step 4: pronounce [ʃʃʃʃ]

Exercise 20:

Step 1: pronounce Chinese words:

吃 [tʃʰ i], 车 [tʃʰ ə]

Step 2: pronounce German words:

cello [ˈtʃɛ lo], cembalo [ˈtʃɛm ba lo]

Step 3: pronounce [tʃʰ tʃʰ tʃʰ tʃʰ]

↓ feel the difference

Step 4: pronounce [tʃ tʃ tʃ tʃ]

Exercise 21:

Step 1: pronounce the Chinese words

惹 re [zə], 如 [zu]

Step 2: pronounce the German words

genie [ʒe 'ni:], loge ['lo: ʒə]

Step 3: pronounce [ʒʒʒʒʒʒ]

↓ feel the difference

Step 4: pronounce [ʒ ʒ ʒ ʒ]

The [ç] and [x] sound

The [ç] and [x] sound are two special and interesting characters in German IPA. The [ç] is voiceless palatal fricative, often called “ich-Laut” (ich-sound); and the [x] sound is voiceless velar fricative, often called “ach-Laut” (ach-sound).⁴⁸ The pronunciation of [x] is like the sound of [h] in Pinyin, which means the back of the tongue reaches for the velar soft palate. The air passing through the narrow passage between soft palate, and back of the tongue creates friction.⁴⁹ However, the [ç] sound is a very new pronunciation for Mandarin singers, and no equivalent sound is found in Pinyin. The pronunciation of [ç] is very similar to the sound of the word human and humor but with more intensity. To produce the [ç] sound, simply form your mouth for

⁴⁸ Lanzrein and Cross, *The Singer's Guide to German Diction*, 114.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 133.

[j] as in *yes* and direct an energetic flow of air over the arch of your tongue.⁵⁰ This sound could be a very challenging for Mandarin singers, because it is easy for them to pronounce the [ç] sound as another Chinese x [ɕ] sound. The x [ɕ] sound is found in Chinese Pinyin, which sounds a little like [ç] sound. The x [ɕ] sound is a voiced fricative sound. When pronouncing this sound, the tongue is placed under the lower teeth ridge and under the gum ridge. In order to correctly make the [ç] sound, singers can first pronounce the x [ɕ] sound, then simply release the tongue from the lower teeth and gum ridge and let the arch of the tongue touch the hard palate, then let the air flow over the arch of the tongue. See exercise below:

Exercise 22:

Step 1: pronounce the Chinese words:

夏 [ɕia], 需[ɕü]

Step 2: pronounce the German words:

Ich [ɪç], mich [mɪç]

Step 3: pronounce [ɕ ɕ ɕ ɕ]

↓ remember to form the mouth for [j] before pronouncing the [ç] sound.

Step 4: pronounce [ç ç ç ç]

The flipped [r] sound

The [r] sound in IPA has three ways to pronounce: uvular, flipped, rolled. In German singing, *r* for classical singing should be pronounced with a flip of the tongue

⁵⁰ Wall, Caldwell, Allen, and Gavilanes, *Diction for Singers*, 184.

whenever it precedes a vowel.⁵¹ The flipped [r] sound is also called a tap [r] sound, which is the single flip *r*. Besides the flipped [r] sound, vocalic *r* is also applied to German singing, which makes the *r* turned into a vowel [ɐ] sound. The pronunciation of “der” has been discussed earlier in German vowels section, no further discussion is needed here. Regarding the correct pronunciation of flipped [r], according to Joan Wall’s statement, “To articulate the flipped [r], singers should retract the tongue tip and point upward just behind the teeth ridge. Raise the soft palate and close the nasal passageway.⁵² The pronunciation of the flipped [r] sound is very challenging to Mandarin singers, because it is absent in Pinyin, and no similar pronunciation is found in Pinyin. To correctly pronounce it, first, the singer needs to relax the tongue. Second, based on the writer’s practice experience, the writer’s previous Chinese vocal teachers’ suggestions, and some other Mandarin singers’ experience, practicing the [d] and [t] could be feasible way of reaching the correct flipped [r] sound. As Thomas Grubb suggests in his book:

“It is articulated by the tip of the tongue flapping one across voiced breath against the rim dividing the gum ridge and the hard palate. For those who find the flipping of an[r] difficult, it might be helpful to start with a light [d], gradually relaxing the stoppage, and eventually on the rim. Remember that [d] is explosive with complete blockage and dental stoppage, while [r] has fricative qualities, with incomplete blockage and sustained stoppage.⁵³

Thus, practicing the [d] and [t] sound is a helpful way to achieve the sound of the flipped [r]. See Exercise below:

Exercise 23:

⁵¹ Adams, *A Handbook of Diction for Singers*, 154.

⁵² Joan Wall, *International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers*, (Dallas, Texas, 1989), 188.

⁵³ Thomas Grubb, *Singing in French a Manual of French Diction and French Repertoire*, (New York: Schirmer 1979), 77.

Pronounce these sounds:

[de de de de] → [re re re re] (just slightly flip the *r*, don't make it to a rolled *r*)

[dre dre dre dre]→ read it slowly at first, then speed up

[tu tu tu tu] → [ru ru ru ru]

[tru tru tru trau]→ read it slowly at first, then speed up

Double consonant:

Double consonants are frequently used in German IPA, but Chinese Pinyin does not have double consonants. In spoken German, double consonants are not particularly lengthened as they are in Italian. However, in sung German, they often are.⁵⁴ In order to accurately pronounce double consonants, it just requires singers to focus more on the preceding vowel before the consonant and make the preceding vowel open and shorten.⁵⁵ For Mandarin singers, it could be easy for them to pronounce double consonants like single consonants, because Pinyin does not have double consonants. For double consonants practice, singers could try to pronounce the double consonants slightly longer than a single consonant. See the exercise below:

Exercise 24:

Pronounce Chinese words:

么[mə, mə, mə]→try to pronounce [mmə, mmə]→or ['mə, 'mə] (imagine there is a stress on the *m*)

Pronounce German double consonants:

⁵⁴ Adams, *A Handbook of Diction for Singers*, 166.

⁵⁵ Wall, Caldwell, Allen, and Gavilanes, *Diction for Singers*, 188.

Himmel ['hɪm:məl]→ hold the *mm* a little longer than the *ɪ*

Wonne ['vɔn:nə]→ hold the *nn* a little longer than the *o*

Glottal stop:

Glottal stop is also called glottal separation, which means the words that begin with a vowel are usually initiated with a light glottal stroke.⁵⁶ It is articulated by the complete closing of the glottis in the larynx.⁵⁷ The IPA symbol for this sound is [ʔ] or [ʀ]. In singing, a glottal stroke is pronounced quick and light. For example, when comparing the English word “announce” [ə.'nɑʊns] with the German word “an ounce” [æn ʔ ɔʊns], it is apparently seen that the word “announce” does not have glottal stop and glottal stroke, but the word “an ounce” does have a very quick but light glottal stop between the first *n* and *a*. In fact, Chinese Pinyin does not have glottal separation, so Mandarin singers might need to practice it. To practice the sound, Mandarin singers should also develop the skill of releasing final consonants and articulating a following vowel with a subtle lift that implies a brief glottal separation but is different from a true glottal.⁵⁸ In *Lieder* singing, from writer’s personal singing experience and learning from other great singers, the glottal separation can either be pronounced as a touch/light glottal separation or pronounced legato. See the exercise below:

Exercise 25:

⁵⁶ Lanzrein and Cross, *The Singer’s Guide to German Diction*, 31.

⁵⁷ Wall, Caldwell, Allen, and Gavilanes, *Diction for Singers*, 189.

⁵⁸ Lanzrein and Cross, *The Singer’s Guide to German Diction*, 32.

1. an ounce [æ̃n ? ʌ̃ns]: the first possible way of pronouncing it could be pronouncing the first *n* and *a* clearly, light and separately. This can produce a glottal stop. The pronunciation sounds like a separate [æ̃n] +[ʌ̃ns].

2. an ounce [æ̃n ? ʌ̃ns] the second possible way of pronouncing it could be pronouncing the first *n* clearly by moving the tip of tongue toward the back of the upper teeth, let the tongue stay at the back of the upper teeth and then quickly pronounce the *a*. This is pronounced like a [æ̃]+[nʌ̃ns], which sounds like a legato glottal stop.

The [m], [n], and [ŋ] sound

These three sounds are nasal. In Chinese Pinyin, the [ŋ] sound in German IPA is the same as the sound in Pinyin. In Pinyin, the back-nasal final consonants include ang, uang, eng, iang, ueng, ing, ong, iong are back-nasal finals. When pronouncing these back-nasal finals in Chinese, singers should pronounce a sustained vowel to the nasal consonant. When pronouncing the [ŋ] in German, the nasal sound also gradually increases.

It is obvious to know that learning vowels and consonants in German IPA is very challenging for Mandarin singers. Reading and vocalizing exercises are an effective way to help them learn the correct pronunciation and diction of German IPA. Besides these exercises, when singing *Lieder*, to accurately pronounce the words and sing them beautifully, Mandarin singers should also learn the pronunciation rules of German language, always use dictionaries, keep working with experienced vocal coaches, and listen to many other great native singers and non-native singers who sing *Lieder* with correct and beautiful diction. Mandarin singers should make sure that they are able to sing German words accurately, articulately, and beautifully after

carefully learning the German language. However, to achieve this goal, it is not enough to only learn German IPA. German poetry plays a crucial role in *Lieder*, so the interpretation of German poetry is also very important for singers. The following chapter will discuss the difficulties for Mandarin singers when interpreting German poetry.

Chapter V: Difficulties in Interpretation of German Poetry

1. The Importance and Approach of German Lieder Comprehension

The last chapter discusses German phonetic challenges and solutions for Mandarin singers. German language and diction play a primary and significant role in singing *Lieder*, however, only learning German language and diction is not enough. To better sing and perform *Lieder*, besides learning German diction, interpreting German poetry is another important step. When singing art songs, singers are not only singing the words, but also expressing the emotions of the texts/poetry. The definition of *Lied* is generally defined as a genre that melds poetry and music into a unique relationship in which piano and voice are closely linked to the poetic phrase, and the melody, harmony, and rhythm of the music are crafted to reflect the meaning and mood of the poems they interpreted.⁵⁹ As the definition shows, the *Lied* is tightly connected with poetry, so understanding the poetry is a very important step for singers.

German poetry and *Lieder* are associated with German Romanticism which started under the effect of the French Revolution and was a reaction against the period called the “Enlightenment”.⁶⁰ The Enlightenment started in the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress), which is a movement characterized by increased intensity and emotionalism.⁶¹ However, the romantic supporters rejected the limitations of the Enlightenment and supported the boundlessness of romanticism. After that, romantic themes of fascination, sublime, and the supernatural became popular throughout Europe during this period.

Singers should keep in mind that the term “Romanticism” is a significant

⁵⁹ Lorraine Gorrell, *The Nineteenth-Century German Lied*, (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993), 15.

⁶⁰ Stein, Spillman, *Poetry into Song*, 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 4.

concept in the German art song since the *Lied* is so closely wedded to the literary movements that preceded and paralleled it.⁶² In *Lieder*, the Romantic literary themes include: the artist as a wanderer cast out from society, reveling in nature, a past and exotic love, supernatural forces, ghosts, fairies, and the glorification of romantic love.⁶³ The poets also wrote poetry that was imaginary, vague, something unfamiliar, beyond real life, of detached love, and so on. Among many German poets, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe made a profound contribution to the development of German *Lieder*. His poetry provided beautiful texts to the composers; his poetry was set to music more than any other poets. Goethe's *Lied* "Gretchen am Spinnrade" became the first and foremost example of what the *Lied* was to become.⁶⁴ As Rufus stated in his book:

The establishment of the *Lied* as an autonomous musical form was by far the greatest achievement of Schubert's early years.....when all is said, it was Schubert's genius, under the stimulus of Goethe's poetry, which created "Gretchen am Spinnrade", and which was responsible for the great outpouring of song which followed.⁶⁵

As this shows, Goethe's poetry played an important role in the development of *Lieder*. Besides Goethe, other poets like Heine, Eichendorff, Rückert, Mörike, were also important poets in the development of German *Lieder*.

In short, singers need to read, learn, and understand poetry before learning the music. Kimball stated that "without poetry, there would be no art songs to sing. In an art song, the poem existed first, complete with its own 'music.'"⁶⁶ Knowing the

⁶² Gorrell, *The Nineteenth-Century German Lied*, 43.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 43.

⁶⁴ Rufus E Hallmark, "German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century," in *Routledge Studies in Musical Genres*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

⁶⁶ Carol Kimball, "Making Poems Sing," *Journal of Singing* (The Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Inc. no. 5, May 2013), 615–18.

importance of poetry in art songs, to better understand German poetry, singers are expected to understand German Romanticism, and study the poetry of important poets, such as Goethe, Heine, Schiller, Eichendorff, Rückert, and Mörike. Poetry itself contains important elements, such as the meter, the rhythm, the texture. First, singers should be able to understand and grasp the main structure of the poems when studying them, then the following step would be to learn and understand the poetry. Since many themes of German poetry in *Lieder* are associated with German Romanticism, studying German Romanticism would help singers better understand the meaning and the theme of the poetry.

Poetry is made up of words. Kimball stated that poetry also creates a pattern of sound and even that sound has meaning, and that there are several component parts of poetry that the reader should be aware of: word sounds, texture, imagery, rhythm.⁶⁷ Imagination is one of the most essential abilities in interpreting art songs.⁶⁸ Every poem has particular sounds, rhymes, rhythms, textures, imagery, accents, and punctuations of words. Singers should grasp these important elements when reading and studying poetry. When composers compose the *Lieder*, they create the music based on the words of the poetry/text, and the theme and emotion of the music is created by the composer's reflections upon the theme and meaning of the poetry. Therefore, singers should be aware that in art songs, poetry and music are tightly interwoven. Following the particular sound, rhyme, rhythm, accents, texture, imagery, punctuations of the poem would help singers convey the theme and meaning of the poetry, and more clearly relate the emotions of the music in their performance of a *Lieder*.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 615-18.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 615-18.

2. Challenges for Mandarin-Chinese Singers in Interpreting German Poetry

Difficulties in interpreting concepts and themes of German Romanticism

When singing *Lieder*, singers need to be familiar with the background of the song, such as the background of the poetry, information about the poets, the theme of the poetry that is associated with German Romanticism, the historical background of German Romanticism, the interpretation of German Romanticism, the interpretation of the texts, and even the pronunciation of the texts. For most Mandarin-Chinese singers, understanding the language of German poetry is challenging. It is difficult to know all this background information because many Chinese singers do not have a deep understanding of Western history and culture. Not being familiar with Western history and culture produces problems as Mandarin-Chinese singers unlock the challenges of German *Lieder*.

The interpretation of German Romanticism in *Lieder* can be a challenge for many Mandarin-Chinese singers. The concepts and characteristics of German Romanticism are kind of abstract, which is difficult to understand. To understand the primary elements and themes of German Romanticism like something beyond limits, some concept between visible and invisible, to enjoy the infinite and so on, produces difficulties for Mandarin singers.

Richard Strauss's song "*Die Nacht*," contains a poem within written by the Austrian poet Hermann von Gilm. The poem describes the fear of the night which steals the beloved, the night is horrible because it takes away everything from our lives, including the lights, the colors, and the lover. It is very difficult to understand the description of the song as the theme is abstract and nonrepresentational, which means the concept is very imaginative. To most Mandarin-Chinese singers, to better

understand this imaginative concept, they need to use their variable imaginations of the fear of night, what people might look like when they fear the night, how the fear of night affects their lives and emotions, what people would think and do when they fear that their lovers are stolen by the night, and so on. Everything is about the imagination, because there is no actual image directly describing the night stealing the beloved. The concept cannot be written down and described because it is physically invisible but emotionally visible, so Chinese singers need to have a real and deep interpretation of this concept by using their imagination, so that they could truly express the correct emotions of this song when singing it. However, this kind of abstract imagination could be difficult for them to achieve, because on one hand, the words, the concept, and the images are from Western culture, which is difficult for the Chinese to understand, on the other hand, the concept and theme that the poet describes in this song is related to something beyond limits, some concept between visible and invisible, something infinite, which is the main characteristic of German Romanticism. Imagination is a very significant factor in interpretation German poetry.

Ann C., Rufus, Harry E, and Jürgen also stated in this book:

“In relatively informal discussions of German Lieder (or of the art song in general), writers ordinarily pay attention to the most colorful, pathetic, or suggestive imagery in the poem and to what we might call the “prose content”—the story, message, or “meaning” of the poem—and the mood created or evoked.”⁶⁹

For Chinese singers, the lack of imagination and Western cultural interpretation might limit their ability to fully interpret German poetry.

⁶⁹ Fehn, Halmark, Seelig, and Thym, *Of Poetry and Song*, 6.

Another poem “*Gretchen am Spinnrade*”, written by Goethe, also demonstrates the challenges for Chinese singers to interpret German poetry. The theme of this poem describes a very young girl who is inexperienced in love and has been seduced by the much older Faust. The themes presented in this poem are related to physical affection, seduction, and madness. The young girl, Gretchen fell in love with Faust was seduced by him. This seduction would be considered shameful in most cultures, but in Chinese culture, it would not be openly discussed. That makes this poetry particularly challenging for Mandarin singers.

Challenges to interpret the content and structure of German poetry

This paper has shown how interpreting German poetry and German Romanticism is one of the most significant elements in singing a *Lied*. If singers cannot fully understand the meaning of the poem, it will probably cause one to fail to successfully sing and perform a *Lied* with expression, emotion, and imagination. When interpreting German poetry, poetic content and poetic form are two basic components. Poetic content includes imagination, metaphor, symbol, irony, which are rhetorical devices.⁷⁰ These rhetorical devices are always found in the poetry that is written by Goethe and Heine. For example, a metaphor is written of images so that a poet may describe the beloved: “My love is a flower”, or “My love is like a red, red rose.”⁷¹ These kinds of images are always found in the lyrics of a *Lied*, and the lover’s description about the world of nature expresses much about the poet’s feelings without them having to be stated explicitly.⁷² Another term related to poetry is the “symbol”. A symbolic image that is found in *Lieder* always represents something that

⁷⁰ Stein, Spillman, *Poetry into Song*, 21.

⁷¹ Ibid, 22.

⁷² Ibid, 22.

is abstract. For example, the nightingale is an image that is often appeared in *Lieder* and even in French *Mélodies*, which is the symbol of the lament for lost love rather than an image of vivid nature sounds. The term “Irony” in *Lieder* always represents irony to life. Irony is the expression of one thing to convey something else, often something having an opposite meaning. Sarcastic and humorous contexts are often appeared as ironic presentations.⁷³ Chinese poetic culture may have similar poetic content that German poetry has, but Chinese signers still need to be familiar with the poetic content that is usually found in *Lieder*, such as the “nightingale” image, the use of natural world implicitly express feelings and emotions.

German poetic form is even more complex than its poetic content. In general, the poetic meter can be divided into two patterns: the first pattern is accented and unaccented syllables, the second pattern is the line length measured in the number of accented syllables or “poetic feet.”⁷⁴ For example, in Goethe’s “Ganymed”, the first line has three poetic feet which is three accented syllables, and the second and third have two. The first line proceeds with a regular alteration of accented and unaccented syllables; the second and third lines have pairs of unaccented syllables between the first and second accented syllables.⁷⁵ See table 7 below:

Table 7 Goethe’s “Ganymed”⁷⁶

Wie im Mórngenglánze	As in the morning brilliance
Dú rings mich ánglühst,	You glow, surrounding me,

⁷³ Ibid, 24.

⁷⁴ Malin, *Songs in Motion*, 5.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 6.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 6.

Frü' hling, Gelfebter! Spring, beloved!

Note: the bold marks are accented syllables.

Poetic meters regularly have trimeter lines (with three accented syllable per line), tetrameter lines (with four accented syllables per line), or a combination of the two. These poetic meters appear in various common patterns. Poetic rhythm is also important for singers, especially when reading poetry. The poetic rhythm is associated with the stress or the duration of patterns. Chinese singers would need to figure out the poetic meters (the stress and unstressed syllables) and the duration patterns so that they are able to feel the legato and the poetic flow. Rhyme Schemes are also important when reading poetry. Most German Romantic poetry uses some form of End-Rhyme, which is the ending of two lines of a stanza with words having the same vowel sound.⁷⁷ Some shorter stanza forms (couplets and quatrains) use End-Rhyme schemes to organize the meaning of the poem.⁷⁸ The notated End-Rhyme such as *aa*, *abba*, *abab*, *aaba* are always found in German poetry, which creates other relationships between and among lines.⁷⁹ Chinese singers should have the knowledge of the rhyme scheme in order to understand the meaning of the poetry and the relationship between and among the lines.

In short, the poems and poets never directly display or tell the meaning and emotion of their poetry to the singers. Singers should interpret the texts with their own learning, understanding, and conclusions of the poetic content and form as well as

⁷⁷ Stein, Spillman, *Poetry into Song*, 34.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 34.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 34.

with their own personal imagination of the content. By doing so, they might be able to achieve the real meaning of the poetry.

3. Suggestions for Mandarin-Chinese singers for interpreting German *Lieder*

Mandarin-Chinese singers should have the skills to interpret German poetry to better sing and perform *Lieder*. The understanding of German Romanticism as well as the interpretation of poetic content and structure challenge Chinese singers to fully understand German poetry, the differences between Eastern and Western culture also produce difficulties for Chinese singers to understand German poetry. However, there are possible ways and suggestions that might aid them to a better understanding of German poetry.

To make a conclusion, first, do some research about German Romanticism and learn the related knowledge that might help to understand German *Lieder*, such as learning about the important German romantic poets Goethe, Schiller, Müller. Knowing the background of these important poets would greatly help Chinese singers understand the concept and meaning of the poetry. Second, learn and study the poetic content and structure as much as one can when singing a *Lied*. Important poetic content and structure has always appeared in *Lieder*, Chinese singers may try to work with a coach or teacher who has the capabilities to teach them how to analyze German poetic and structure. Analyzing the complicated German poetic structure and content by Chinese singers might not work because of the differences between Chinese traditional poems and Western poems. During the studying of poetic content, Chinese singers should stretch their imagination when studying poetry. Limiting the imagination would limit Chinese singers from fully understanding and expressing the meaning and emotion of the texts.

Third, read, feel, think, and sing the poetry. This could help singers draw or present an actual picture of the texts. When reading poetry, try to follow the rhyme scheme, poetic rhythm, and the prosody of the words. Sometimes the rhythm of the text is the same or similar as the rhythm of the music, so following the rhythm of the text could help singers feel the rhythm of the music. Kimball Carol wrote that:

“When we give ourselves over to the sounds of words, we start to feel the sound energy that exists in the arrangement of words in poems... . Reading aloud helps us discover the fluidity in a string of words. We experience the shape and movement of the poetic lines through inflected pitch, correct pronunciation, and clear articulation. Our diction improves, and our imaginations are stretched.”⁸⁰

Fourth, Chinese singers should try their best to fully understand every word and meaning displayed in the poetry of German *Lieders*. Learning the language and pronunciation is the fundamental step, and word by word translation of the texts into Chinese would greatly help singers understand the meaning of the poetry. After singers have the entire understanding of the poetry from their own point of view, they should be able to achieve the final goal of singing an art song: emotional expressions. The last chapter will discuss how to interpret the texts to express the emotions of German *Lieder*.

⁸⁰ Carol Kimball, “Making Poems Sing,” 615-18.

Chapter VI: Performance Side: Texts Translation and Interpretation in Lieder

1. The Importance of Texts Translation and Emotional Expression

Chapter 5 discussed the importance and suggestions for Chinese singers when interpreting German poetry. However, to better understand, sing, and perform a *Lied*, besides the interpretation in poetry, understanding the texts is also another significant step. Textual interpretation is significant because it enables singers to emotionally connect to the songs that they perform. An accurate textual understanding and emotional connection go hand in hand when attempting to successfully perform an art song.⁸¹ Art songs contain many different aspects of texts and musical elements related to texts which are necessary for singers to analyze, including the texts' settings, melodic lines of texts, vocal lines, harmony, tonality, motive, rhythm, meter, and so on. Singers need to study these aspects to fully understand the texts. Thus, the study procedure takes a lot of time from months to years. However, for many Chinese singers, the interpretation in translations of texts could be confused, which hinders their ability to correctly understand the meaning of texts and even express the emotions of texts.

2. Suggestions for Mandarin-Chinese Singers to Better Interpret the Translations and Emotions of *Lied*

Each *Lied*, is based upon an original text in its original language, German. Singers often find the word-by-word literal translation through International Phonetic Alphabet Sources Online⁸², and follow up with the paraphrased translation that could

⁸¹ Blake, "A Methodology for Thorough Text Preparation of German Lieder," 1-44.

⁸² "IPA Source," IPA Source website, last modified 2023, <https://www.ipasource.com/>.

be found online in different languages or written by experienced singers themselves. The paraphrased translation could be written in different words by varying online resources because they are “paraphrased”, but the basic meaning of the translation is the same. For Chinese singers, the paraphrased translation may not be the best translation because they are not written in original Chinese. There will be differences in their textual interpretation between English and Chinese because of the language differences between English and Chinese. This may make it difficult for Chinese singers to grasp the core meaning of the poetry and the emotion of the texts. Therefore, for Chinese singers, they need to first find the original text and the literal translation. Then they must look for the paraphrased translations online or write them down themselves. After that they should transfer the paraphrased translations into Chinese - to find or write down the word by word and phrasing translations in Chinese.

It is not hard to find the paraphrased translations which were written in Chinese from different Chinese papers *about singing German Lieder*, but the emotional expression of the words for each phrasing were not written or indicated after the Chinese paraphrased translations. The missing of emotional expression words for each phrasing translation might cause Chinese singer’s difficulties in expressing the correct emotions of *Lieder*. Therefore, for Chinese singers, when singing a *Lied*, they would first need to do some research about the background of the piece, which may include the information on the composer, the poetic analysis, and the main theme and emotion of the music. Then they may propose seven “core” questions that are related to translations and emotions to ask themselves:

1. Who is/are the character(s) in the music? How old is/are the characters?
2. What is/are the character(s) doing in the music? What do they need or want?

3. What is/are the character(s) experiencing in the music?
4. How/why does the situation happen in the music?
5. How does/do the character(s) feel in the music? What emotions does the song present?
6. What provokes emotions or feelings?
7. What expressions do the character(s) want to express through the piece? How will they express them? Does the song fulfill what the character (s) want?

The more “core” questions the singers could propose, the deeper the interpretation of the translations and emotions they will be able to achieve.

3. The Steps for Mandarin-Chinese Singers to Interpret Translations and Emotions

Derived from the writer’s *Lieder* study and performance experience, there are steps to proposing questions and dealing with different translations. These steps will aid Chinese singers in interpreting the translations and emotions of an art song. The following steps will use the first song of the song cycle “*Frauenliebe und Leben*” (Robert Schumann) as examples.

“*Frauenliebe und Leben*” (*A Woman’s Love and Life*) was the last song cycle of Schumann, which was composed based on the poetry of Adalbert von Chamisso written in 1830. It has eight songs that demonstrate the progression of a woman’s feelings for a man from the first time she meets him, through the period of love, engagement, marriage, pregnancy, motherhood, and becoming a widow. The woman’s life starts when she meets the man who will marry her and ends with his death, leaving her only with memories.⁸³ The song cycles contain poems that attempt to mirror the emotional experiences of women at various stages of life.⁸⁴

⁸³ Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 80.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 80.

The song cycle has eight poems that describe different life phases that the women experienced, along with all of her various emotional states throughout these phases. The first song “Seit ich ihn gesehen” as an example, Chinese singers should follow the steps below to fully interpret the translations and emotions.

Step 1: Find the basic information for the piece. Singers should research and have the knowledge of the basic information for each song that they will be performing. The fundamental information could include background information about the composer and the song, the theme, the story, and the emotions of the song. In this song, it describes three main emotions that the girl was experiencing when she first met the man: excitement, longing, and shyness. The song expresses a young girl who fell in love with a man the first time she met him. The protagonist is the young girl, who herself expressed how she felt and how her life changed after the first time she met the man.

Step 2: Propose questions. After knowing the basic information of the song, Mandarin singers may propose seven or more “core” questions that are related to the translations and emotions to ask themselves:

1. Who is/are the character(s) in the music? How old is/are the characters?
2. What is/are the character(s) doing in the music? What do they need or want?
3. What is/are the character(s) experiencing in the music?
4. How/why does the situation happen in the music?
5. How does/do the character(s) feel in the music? What emotions does the song present?
6. What provokes the emotions or feelings?
7. What expressions do the character(s) want(s) to express through the piece? How will they express them? Does the song fulfill what the character (s) want?

In this song, the character is a young girl, the accurate age is anonymous. Based on the research of this song, to answer question 7, singers already know what the young girl was experiencing in this song, how she felt in this song, and what the emotions of the song are. Singers may also know the basic and overall expressions that the girl wants to express through the piece, but they may not be able to get the emotional expressions of every phrasing in the song. Every phrase could represent a specific and different emotional mode. The more questions singers propose, the more specific, and varied the emotions would that singers are trying to express.

Step 3: Write the translations

Translate the words into Chinese with the intent to preserve the emotions during the translation. Remember that proposing questions is a way of assisting singers when figuring out the emotions of every phrase. This gives singers a deeper understanding of each phrasing, however, only proposing questions is not enough. Singers still need to study and write translations which will explain the meaning of every word and the phrasing as a whole. Other questions that were proposed in step 2 like question 2, 4, and 6 get singers to analyze the translations to better understand the emotions of the piece. Chinese singers need to read the original text first, then find the literal translation as well as write their own paraphrased translation in Chinese that include words that properly represent the emotions of the song. Table 8.1 shows the original text and literal translation of “Seit ich ihn gesehen”.

Table 8.1 “Seit ich ihn gesehen” Original Text and Literal Translation

Original Text	Literal Translation (word by word translation from IPA source)
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Seit ich ihn gesehen, Glaub ich blind zu sein;	Since I him have seen Believe I blind to be
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<p>Wo ich hin nur blicke, Seh ich ihn allein;</p> <p>Wie im wachen Traume Schwebt sein Bild mir vor, Taucht aus tiefstem Dunkel, Heller nur empor.</p> <p>Sonst ist licht- und farblos Alles um mich her,</p> <p>Nach der Schwestern Spiele</p> <p>Nicht begehrt ich mehr, Möchte lieber weinen, Still im Kämmerlein;</p> <p>Seit ich ihn gesehen, Glaub ich blind zu sein.</p>	<p>When I there just gaze See I him alone</p> <p>How in waking dream Floats his image me before Dipped from deepest darkness Brighter in ascent</p> <p>Else is light and colourless All around me here</p> <p>After the Sister's Games</p> <p>Not desire I more Would rather weep Quiet in the little chamber</p> <p>Since I him have seen Believe I blind to be</p>
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After finding the literal translation, writing down the paraphrased translation, Chinese translation, and emotional words would be the next steps. See Table 8.2 as an example below:

Table 8.2 “Seit ich ihn gesehen” Original Text, Paraphrased Text⁸⁵, and Chinese Translation

Original Text	Paraphrased Translation	Chinese Translation (Self Translation)
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⁸⁵ Blake, “A Methodology for Thorough Text Preparation of German Lieder,” 1-44.

Seit ich ihn gesehen, Glaub ich blind zu sein; Wo ich hin nur blicke, Seh ich ihn allein; Wie im wachen Traume Schwebt sein Bild mir vor, Taucht aus tiefstem Dunkel, Heller nur empor. Sonst ist licht- und farblos Alles um mich her, Nach der Schwestern Spiele Nicht begehrt ich mehr, Möchte lieber weinen, Still im Kämmerlein; Seit ich ihn gesehen, Glaub ich blind zu sein.	Since I have seen him I believe myself to be blind Wherever I gaze I see him alone As in a waking dream His image floats before me Dipped from deepest darkness Ascending brighter Everything else is light and Colourless all around me I do not desire the games of my sisters anymore I would rather weep quietly in my little chamber Since I have seen him I believe myself to be blind	自从我第一次见到他 我相信我完全沉醉(瞎) 了 不管我看向哪里 我眼里只有他 正如在醒着的梦里一样 他的身影在我面前移动 从最黑暗深处 逐渐走向光明 周围的一切对我来说都 变得暗淡无光与不那么 重要,不再渴望与姐妹 们曾经的游戏与玩乐 我宁愿待在自己的房间 里安静地哭泣 自从我第一次见到他 我相信我相信我完全沉 醉(瞎)了
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Table 8.3 “Seit ich ihn gesehen” Emotional Words for the text

Paraphrased Translation and Emotional Words for the text in English	Chinese Translation and Emotional Words for the text in Chinese
<p>Since I have seen him, I believe myself to be blind</p> <p>(Emotion: excited, happy)</p>	<p>自从我第一次见到他</p> <p>我相信我完全沉醉(瞎)了</p> <p>(兴奋的, 激动的)</p>
<p>Wherever I gaze</p> <p>I see him alone</p> <p>(Emotion: desirable, love)</p>	<p>不管我看向哪里</p> <p>我眼里只有他</p> <p>(渴望的, 充满爱恋的)</p>
<p>As in a waking dream</p> <p>His image floats before me</p> <p>(Emotion: unbelievable, unforgettable)</p>	<p>正如在醒着的梦里一样</p> <p>他的身影在我面前移动</p> <p>(不可思议的, 不能忘记的)</p>
<p>Dipped from deepest darkness</p> <p>Ascending brighter</p> <p>(Emotion: expected, excited)</p>	<p>从最黑暗深处</p> <p>逐渐走向光明</p> <p>(兴奋的, 期待的)</p>

Everything else is light and Colourless all around me (Emotion: careless)	周围的一切对我来说都变得暗淡无光与不那么重要 (随意的，随便的)
---	---

Table 8.3 continued

I do not desire the games of my sisters anymore (Emotion: unwished)	不再渴望与姐妹们曾经的游戏 与玩乐 (不想要的)
I would rather weep quietly in my little chamber (Emotion: unhappy, missed)	我宁愿待在自己的房间里 安静地哭泣 (不开心的，思念的)
Since I have seen him I believe myself to be blind (Emotion: excited, happy, shy)	自从我第一次见到他 我相信我相信我完全沉醉(瞎)了 (激动的，开心的，羞涩的)

As Table 8.2 and 8.3 show, at the beginning of the text, the girl in the song described that she believed she was blind since she met him. The word “blind” appeared twice in this song, which expressed how immediately fell in love with the man as well as the excitement she felt when she first met the man. The word “blind” may imply the girl’s naivety and hastiness due to her excitement, as this is her first love. So, singers

could understand the girl was very excited and happy when she first met the man. She was willing to meet him again. After the first meeting, the text, “Wherever I gaze, I see him alone” showed that the girl was always thinking of the man and indicated that she could not control her thoughts of the man after the first meeting. She desired to meet him again. Therefore, the words “desirable” and “love” could be considered as an emotional description for this text.

The next text “As in a waking dream, his image floats before me” described the unforgettable and unbelievable moment that the girl was experiencing. She sings that the first meeting with the man was like a waking dream, and the image of the man floats before her. So, she felt the meeting with the man was unforgettable and amazing. She then further described the image of the man “Dipped from deepest darkness, and Ascending brighter”. Here, if reading the paraphrased translation, singers can find that it is just the girl’s imagination of the image of the man: the girl was always thinking of the man after the first meeting, she was hoping to see him again, so she imagined the man floats before her and imagines his image dipped from deepest darkness, and ascending brighter. Therefore, the girl could not stop herself from thinking of the man and expecting to see him again. The emotional words “expected” and “excited” express the longing the girl experienced for her beloved boy, as well as the joy and unstoppable excitement of seeing her beloved boy. After that, the girl expressed how her normal life has changed, how the meeting of her first love affected her emotions and her heart.

The texts “Everything else is light and Colourless all around me”, “I do not desire the games of my sisters anymore”, and “I would rather weep quietly in my little chamber” expressed that she only wanted to see her beloved and stayed with him, everything else is unimportant and colorless. She could not pay attention to anything

else except the man. She did not want to play games with her sisters anymore, she would rather stay in her little chamber and weep quietly. The text did not show what kinds of games the girl played with her sisters before, it could be any sort of games. From the writer's point of view and interpretation, the text expressed that the girl did not want to do any of normal activities that she did before because she was longing for her beloved. She would rather stay in her small room and cry because she desired to see her beloved. The girl's first experience of love changed what she did before, and made other things become not important at all. For her, now, the most important thing is the man-her beloved one-her first love. Thus, the final text repeats the text of the beginning "Since I have seen him, I believe myself to be blind".

After finishing the Chinese translation and adding emotional words for the text, Chinese singers may have an entire emotional interpretation of the text. When looking back to the proposed questions number 2,4, 6 in step 2, they may be able to find the answers for those questions, or they may feel it is easier for them to find the answers or thoughts for those questions. The Chinese translation of the text and the emotional words tell Chinese singers that the girl was expressing various emotions after the first meeting of her beloved. The girl was telling the story of her first love, how her emotions and normal life were changed after the meeting. What she needed was just the man and her love. The situation happened just after the first meeting with the man. The desire towards the man provoked her feelings and emotions as well as changed her normal life. She finally emphasized again that she was blind when she first met him, which showed the emphasis on excitement and happiness of her emotions.

In short, the paraphrased translation of the text in English and Chinese, and the emotional words for the text help Chinese singers better and fully interpret the meaning of every word in the text. This guides singers to a better interpretation and

emotional expression of each phrasing of the music. Like the paper has stated, emotional expression is the most important element of singing a *Lieder* song. Therefore, writing down the paraphrased translation of the text in Chinese and the emotional words for the text are necessary steps for Chinese singers who would like to sing *Lieder* with confidence and expression.

Conclusion

Having discussed some strengths and limitations of Pinyin and IPA, this study highlights many of the challenges faced by native Mandarin speaker in singing German Lieder. Some solutions have been suggested that could be of help to Mandarin singers in learning and performing German literature. Exercises to help train the ears and muscles of Mandarin singers have been introduced and it is to be hoped that regular practice of these exercises will diminish the difficulties in producing the necessary sounds for singing in German.

In addition to the phonetic challenges, ideas and themes that are found in German poetry can present challenges to Mandarin singers, as well. While this study focuses primarily on the phonetic challenges, there is a great deal of room for further study of the differences between Western and Eastern poetic themes and modes of expression.

APPENDIX

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2020)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)

2020 IPA © 2020

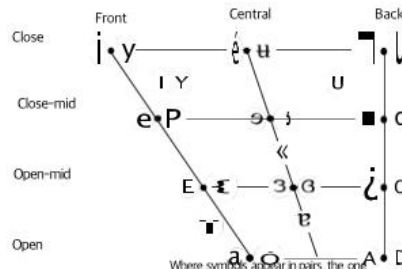
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retr. flex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal	
Plosive	p b			t d		ɬ ɮ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ	
Nasal	m	ɱ		ɲ			ɲ	ŋ	ɴ	ɴ̠		
Trill	ʀ									ʀ̠		
Tap or Flap							ⱱ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	ʕʔ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ̺ ɮ̺								
Approximant		ɹ		ɻ			ɰ	ɰ	ʷ			
Lateral approximant				ɭ					ʎ			

Symbols to the right in a cell are voiced, to the left are voiceless. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)

VOWELS

Clicks	Voiced implosives	Ejectives
Bilabial	Bilabial	Examples:
Dental	Dental/alveolar	ˀ Bilabial
(Postalveolar)	Palatal	pˀ Dental/alveolar
Palatoalveolar	Velar	tˀ Velar
Alveolar lateral	Uvular	kˀ Alveolar fricative



Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

OTHER SYMBOLS

- ʌ Voiceless labial-velar fricative
- ʋ Voiced labial-velar approximant
- ʌ Voiced labial-palatal approximant
- ç Voiceless epiglottal fricative
- ʕ Voiced epiglottal fricative
- ʕ̰ Epiglottal plosive
- ʕ̠ Alveolo-palatal fricatives
- ʕ̡ Voiced alveolar lateral flap
- ʕ̢ Simultaneous ʃ and X

DIACRITICS

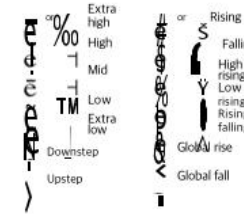
Voiceless	Breathy-voiced	Dental
Voiced	Creaky-voiced	Apical
Aspirated	Linguolabial	Laminar
More rounded	Lateralized	Nasalized
Less rounded	Palatalized	Nasal release
Advanced	Velarized	Lateral release
Retracted	Pharyngealized	No audible release
Centralized	Velarized or pharyngealized	
Mid-centralized	Raised	voiced-alveolar fricative
Syllabic	Lowered	voiced bilabial approximant
Non-syllabic	Advanced Tongue Root	
Rhoticity	Retracted Tongue Root	

Some diacritics may be placed above a symbol with a descender, e.g. ɹ̠̄.

SUPRASEGMENTALS

- Primary stress
- Secondary stress
- Long
- Half-long
- Extra-short
- Minor (foot) group
- Major (intonation) group
- Syllable break
- Linking (absence of a break)

TONES AND WORD ACCENTS



Typefaces: Doulos SIL, (metatext), Doulos SIL, IPA Kiel, IPA L5 Uni (symbols)

⁸⁶ Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File:IPA chart 2020.pdf," Wikimedia Commons, accessed November 20, 2023, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:IPA_chart_2020.pdf&oldid=783445350.

FRAUENLIEBE UND LEBEN

Lieder - Cyklus von Adalbert v. Chamisso
für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte

Schumann's Werke.

von
ROBERT SCHUMANN.

Serie 13. N^o 11.

Op. 42.

Oswald Lorenz gewidmet.

1.

Componirt 1840.

Larghetto.

p

Seit ich ihn ge - se - hen, glaub' ich blind zu sein; wo ich hin nur

ritard.

bli - cke, seh' ich ihn al - lein. Wie im wa - chen Trau - me schwebt sein Bild - mir vor, - taucht aus

ritard.

tief - stem Dun - kel hel - ler, hel - ler nur em - por. Sonst ist licht - und

pp pp

farb - los al - les um mich her, nach der Schwe - stern Spie - le nicht be - gehr' ich mehr, möch - te

ritard.

ritard.

Original-Verleger: C. F. Peters in Leipzig.

R. S. 129.

Stich und Druck von Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig.

Ausgegeben 1845.

lieber weinen still im Kämmerlein, seit ich ihn gesehen,

gläublich blind zu sein.

2.

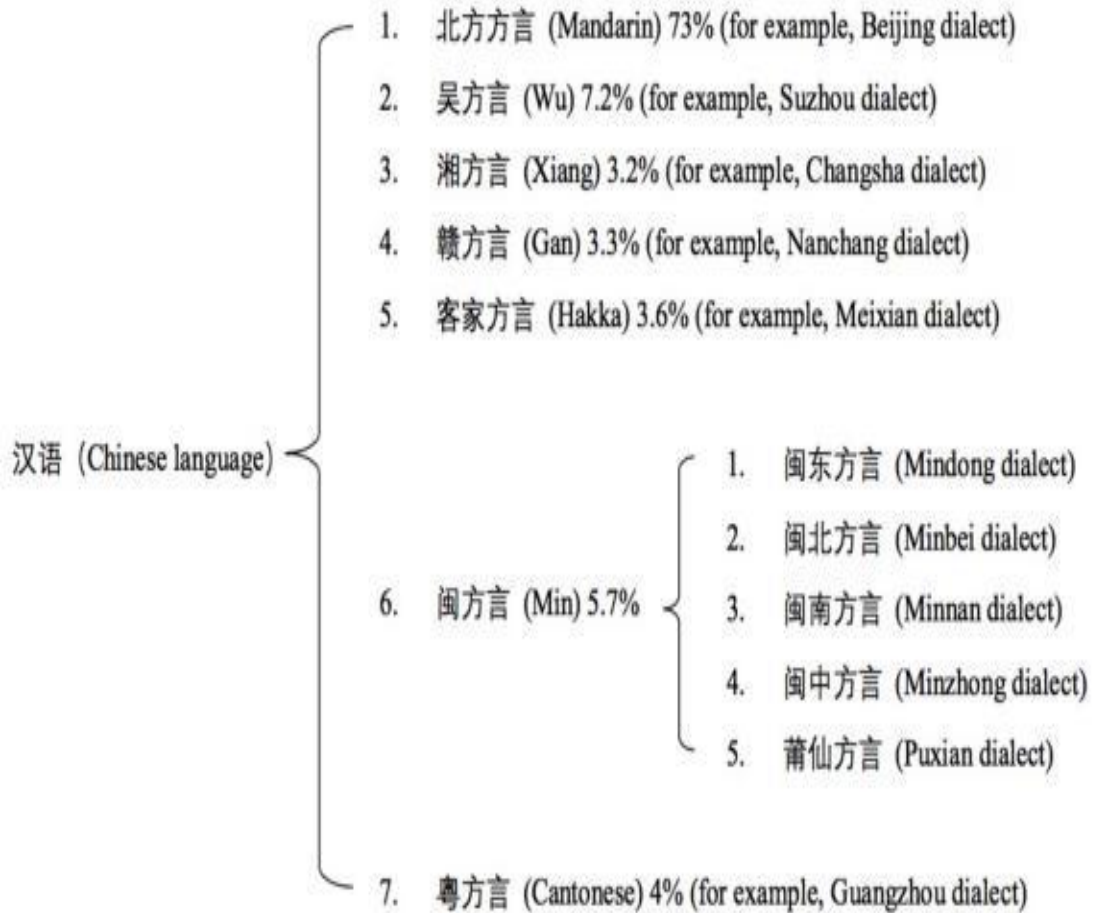
Innig, lebhaft.

Er, der Herrlichste von Allen, wie so milde, wie so

gut! Holde Lippen, klares Auge, heller Sinn und fester Muth.

So wie dort in blauer Tiefe, hell und herrlich, jener Stern, also Er an meinem

R. S. 129.



⁸⁷ <https://vmirror.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/a/a0/IMSLP51733-PMLP12743-RS129.pdf>

⁸⁸ Borong Huang and Xudong Liao, *现代汉语 [The Modern Chinese]* (Beijing: Gao Deng Jiao Yu Press, 2017), 9.

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